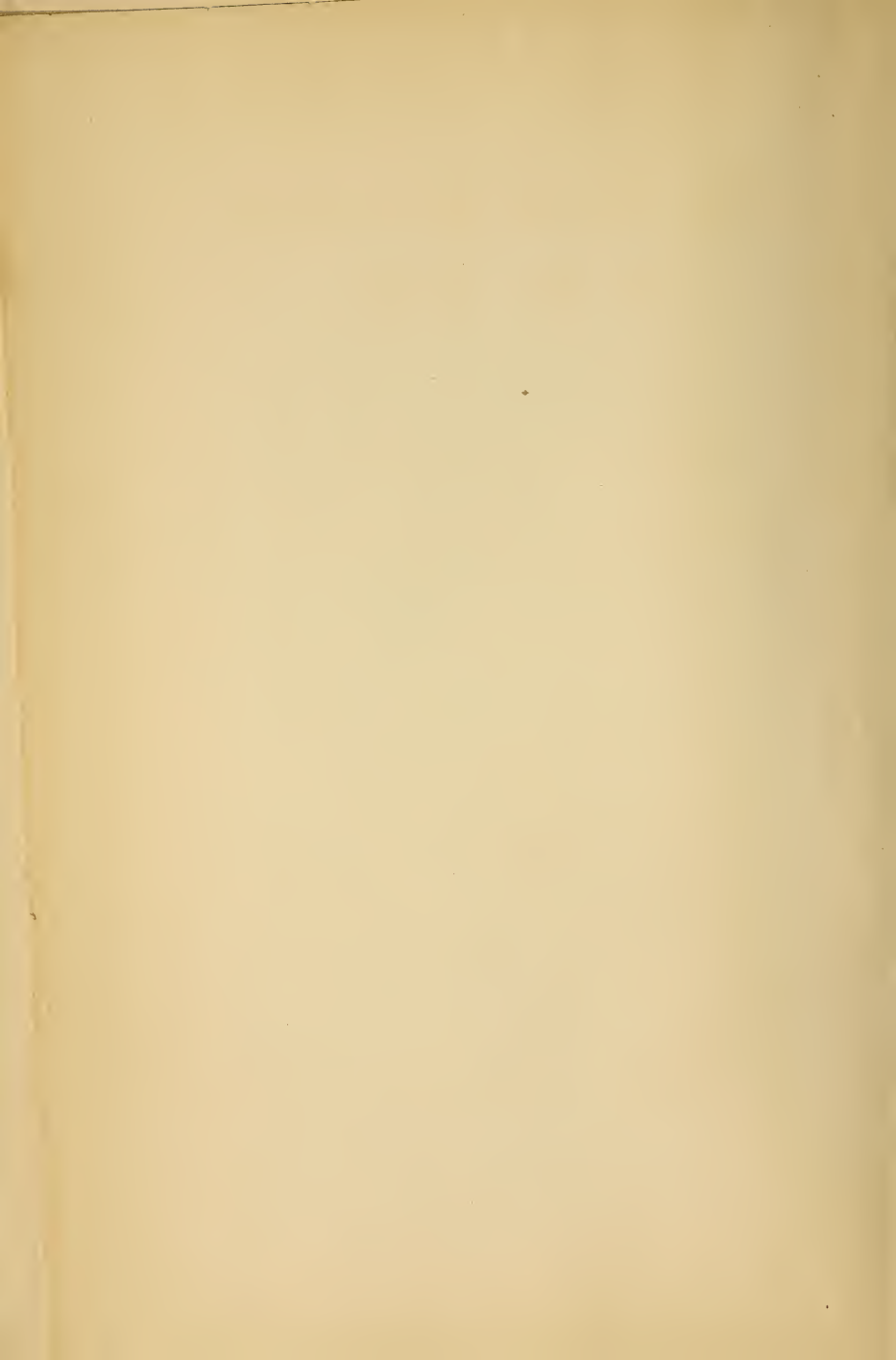


THE GREAT PROMISES OF THE BIBLE

LOUIS
ALBERT
BANKS







The Great Promises of the Bible

By
Rev. Louis Albert Banks, D.D.

Author of
"The Great Saints of the Bible," "The Great Sinners
of the Bible," "The Great Portraits of
the Bible," etc., etc.



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To my Friend
Dr. George P. Eckman

This Volume is
Affectionately Dedicated



BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THIS volume is the fourth member of a quartet, following in line *The Great Sinners of the Bible*, *The Great Saints of the Bible*, and *The Great Portraits of the Bible*. The previous volumes have been so generously treated by the public that I am encouraged to send this forth to the friends already made by them, with the hope that it may be found worthy of fellowship with the others and with an added note of advancement. It deals with great themes. *The Great Promises of the Bible* are the sure anchors that will hold in any storm. These sermons were preached in Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, New York City. They were blessed of God, on their delivery, to the comfort and salvation of many people, and they are sent forth with a prayer that the presence of the Holy Spirit may be felt in the printed page.

LOUIS ALBERT BANKS.

Nyack-on-the-Hudson,
January 25, 1906.

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THE GREAT PROMISES OF THE BIBLE

I

THE PROMISE OF A NEW HEART

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.—*Ezekiel xxxvi, 26.*

ONE of the wonders of Arizona is its petrified forest, or rather, forests, for there are many of them. In a small group of trees recently discovered the sandstone has worn away, leaving exposed huge trees standing like the pillars of some ancient temple. The roots of these trees run into the solid rock. One has been discovered, standing on the summit of a hill, which is the giant of all the petrified forests. It is twenty-seven feet in circumference, with roots embedded in the solid rock. The bark is perfectly preserved in agatized form and is five inches thick. In the rocks about this tree are impressions of branches, leaves, and even cones and fruits. This tree, it is thought, was like

the present giant redwoods of California—certainly it must have been the giant of this great forest of prehistoric times. Some years ago some capitalists staked out a mining claim in one of these forests, and undertook to manufacture emery dust by grinding these petrified trees to powder. But it was soon demonstrated that the tree trunks were too hard to lend themselves to a wholesale commercial use. In fact, it is estimated that the hardness of the average piece of petrified wood is seven-tenths that of the diamond.

We have in these petrified trees an illustration of what takes place in the human heart. There are influences all the time at work in the world which if given free play will make the heart as hard as one of these petrified trees, until it will become what Ezekiel calls "the stony heart." We are constantly seeing illustrations of the effect of avarice and greed upon the heart of a man or a woman, until the affections and sympathies seem to be petrified in the soul, and the suffering of others has no more effect than it would have upon a rock. Shakespeare was right when, in the Merchant of Venice, he makes Antonio, speaking of the effect of avarice on the heart of Shylock, declare that a human heart thus petrified is the hardest and most cruel thing in the world. Speak-

ing of the futility of trying to arouse mercy in Shylock's heart, he says:

"You may as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bate his usual height;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb;
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise,
When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;
You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that—than which what's harder?—
His heart."

But selfishness, which is the great hardener of the heart, does not always take the form of avarice or greed. A self-indulgence which seeks its own comfort with indifference to the comfort of others will soon make the heart as hard as adamant. The natural effect of self-indulgence is to close the eyes and dull the heart so that it cannot see or feel the needs of others. Many a man by his very success thus loses his best self. There is a story of an Italian nobleman who built his enemy into the wall of his castle. He set him there alive, and piled the great stones about him, leaving him there to perish in the heart of the great building. There are thousands of men and women who are doing the same thing with their own souls. They are making money, they are being successful, but they

are burying themselves while they are doing it. The heart within them is becoming petrified. They do not enjoy men and women as much, they are not so tender and sympathetic toward their fellows, and have nothing like the hope and faith in God which they had years ago. The heart is changing to stone.

We need to listen to this message as Christians, for there is always the danger that while we are theoretically Christians, and are entirely orthodox in our creed and correct in all the outward and formal services of the church, our hearts will become to a certain extent petrified and indifferent, and we shall lose that vital and tender association with Christ and our brethren which is the very life and soul of Christianity. Dr. J. H. Jowett, the English preacher, in the annual sermon of the London Missionary Society, took for his text those remarkable words of Paul where he says, "Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ." He sees in these words a window into the heart of the great apostle to the Gentiles. He was so sensitively in touch with Jesus Christ that it put him into tender and sensitive kinship with every man and woman in the world. All the stone had gone out of Paul's heart and his heart was alive to anything that touched his brother with

affliction. He cried out: "Who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I burn not?" And I must confess that I have been greatly moved with the heart cry of Dr. Jowett as he inquires: "My brethren, are we in this succession? Does the cry of the world's need pierce the heart, and ring even through the fabric of our dreams? Do we 'fill up' our Lord's sufferings, or are we the unsympathetic ministers of a mighty passion? I am amazed how easily I become callous. I am ashamed how small and insensitive is the surface which I present to the needs and sorrows of the world. I so easily become enwrapt in the soft wool of self-indulgences and the cries from far and near cannot reach my easeful soul."

A young missionary who had come home from the foreign field sick, and was anxious to get well that he might go back, was asked by a friend why he wished to return, and the answer was a revelation to the man who asked it. "Because I can't sleep for thinking of them!" was the reply. There was a heart with no stone in it. To all that heathen world, with its wicked men and benighted women and groveling children, his heart was as tender and sensitive as a mother's. But how easy it is for us to settle down into a dull and heavy lethargy, until the heart begins to petrify, in our

relation to the lost both at home and abroad. How the world would be kindled with flames of divine fire if every Christian heart could be thoroughly quickened into life and sympathy!

Mrs. Josephine Butler, in her *Life of Saint Catherine*, tells us that Catherine told a friend that the anguish which she experienced in the realization of the sufferings of Christ was the greatest at the moment when she was pleading for the salvation of others. "Promise me that thou wilt save them!" she cried, and, stretching forth her right hand to Jesus, she again implored in agony, "Promise me, dear Lord, that thou wilt save them! O, give me a token that thou wilt!" Then her Lord seemed to clasp her outstretched hand in his, and to give her the promise, and she felt a piercing pain as though a nail had been driven through the palm.

Brothers, sisters, do we know anything of what that means, or is it all a dead language to us? Are we being buried in self-indulgence? Are we so lost in having a good time, or so immersed in care for the conditions of this present life, that the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of the world and the lost condition of our fellow men about us do not get into our hearts so that we are conscious of it? May the Spirit of the living

God awake us! May the Spirit that aroused Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, the Spirit that first called us to repentance, call us again with an electric call that will awaken and arouse us fully to the life of the Spirit!

But if there be this solemn message to those who have entered upon the Christian life, how solemn is that message to you who have given yourself over to your way and have refused to yield in any way to the persuasions of Christ, who offers to be your Saviour! Is it not true that some of your hearts are not only petrified so that there is no love to God or Christ, but that your ideas of Christ are becoming every year more vague and unreal, so that there is less likelihood that he will become your personal Saviour? Your cold and stony heart affects your vision of Christ, so that Christ seems as hard and helpless as is your own spiritual nature.

A novelist has told the story of an Alpine guide who was engaged to be married to a Swiss girl. A few days before the time set for the wedding the girl started off to visit some relatives living on the other side of the mountain. She laughed a farewell as she ascended the steep hillside and waved a bunch of flowers which she held in her hand as she passed out of sight of her friends. It was the

last they ever saw of her. She never returned, and no one knew what had become of her. When her lover heard of her disappearance he set off up the path to seek her, but came back alone with a broken heart. Then he collected building materials, and, refusing all proffered aid, he bore them away up, no one knew where, took supplies of food, and forbade any to trace him to his lonely haunt. When the spring came he returned to the village, took up his place among the guides, and had his share of the mountain-climbing connected with the visitors who came. But although he was an excellent guide he was so morose and sullen that he was never a favorite. Some heavy load seemed to lay upon his heart and crush all joy and hope out of it. Eighteen years passed away, and then the springtime came and he did not appear with the rest of the guides. The old men of the town, who remembered the sad story of his youth, organized a search for him; they traversed glaciers and ice tracks they had never crossed before, till they came to a solitary hut at the edge of a deep crevasse. They knocked at the door, but there was no answer. Then they broke in the door, and found the guide lying upon a couch, cold in death.

Then the secret of his strange life became evi-

dent to them. For there, standing by, was the figure of the girl he had loved long years before. The familiar color was in her cheek, the flowers upon her breast; but a peculiar, steely kind of light enveloped her and they thought they saw a vision. At last one of them put forth his hand and touched the ice that formed her coffin. For eighteen years, so the author's fancy pictures, the Swiss guide had lived, unseen by mortal eye, with the image of his betrothed enshrined within a mold of ice.

Though this may be but a grim fancy of fiction, it is strikingly true as an illustration of our theme. For are there not some who hear me to whom Christ is no more than that? Instead of your heart beating in unison with his, and the divine love from his eyes—the love that transformed the life of Zacchæus and which has lost none of its power—streaming into yours, he is void of life and is clothed to your imagination with an icy coffin of speculation and theory. You believe in the historic Christ just the same as you did when you were a child, but the life, the soul, the living divine personality, near enough to touch you with his hand and give you peace—all that is gone. You say beautiful things, it may be, about Christ, and you think of him as a beautiful

character, but he is the stone Christ, and there is in him no power to give you good cheer and hope and fill your life with the warmth and courage of immortality.

When Dr. F. E. Clark was last in India he held an interesting religious service in the Taj Mahal, which is the most wonderful tomb in the world. Twenty thousand men worked for twenty-two years on the marvelous building. In it sleep the mortal remains of a dead princess. Dr. Clark and a dozen Christians gathered under the marvelous dome within the tomb, and read the Scripture and sang and prayed. Their words echoed and reëchoed and echoed again a hundred times. When they sang, the musical tones were reproduced until it seemed as if a choir of ten thousand angels had taken up the song and was chanting the refrain begun on earth. And yet they had to go away and leave it only a tomb. But suppose they had had the power to have spoken life into that place of death, and brought back the princess to her youth and health and beauty and strength? Thank God, that is what Jesus can do to petrified hearts. He will come into your heart where many beautiful things are buried, and he will bring them again to life and power. He will take away the stony heart and give you a heart of flesh. Do

not make the blunder of trying to live the Christian life without the Christian heart. But to obtain the Christian heart you must obey Christ. He knocks at the door. Open the door and let him in. When he walked with the two disciples out to Emmaus he was going on until they begged him to stop and break bread with them. Has he not walked down the street with you many a day until he came to your door, and looked fondly on you, but you did not invite him in? Has he not often come to sit down beside you in the church, and while the sermon has gone on you have felt that he was sitting there, his shoulder touching against yours, but you went home without him? My friend, he alone is able to change this petrified heart into a heart quick with life and love and hope and faith, a life that shall blossom into joy, that shall bear the fruit of peace, and shall be green and flourishing through all the ages of eternity.

II

THE PROMISE OF FORGIVENESS

Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.—*Luke vi, 37.*

THERE is no stronger, more solemn word in the Bible than the word “forgiveness.” The power to forgive is the very scepter of the majesty of God. David expresses the thought most sublimely in the one hundred and thirtieth psalm when he says, in one of the greatest of his sentences, “But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.”

We sometimes talk glibly about the forgiveness of sins, and about forgiveness between man and man, as though it were a very easy thing to do. But it is not easy. Forgiveness, if it be on God’s part, can only take place when there is a change on our part which justifies the Judge of all the earth in pardoning us in the name of Christ, who died on the cross for our redemption. And forgiveness between man and man is something that enters into the very core of our being. It does not come easy; it is the very climax of the Christian spirit.

It is told of the great Puritan preacher, Dr. John Owen, who wrote a book on the psalm to which I have referred, and largely on the verse about forgiveness, that he came to write the book in this way: A youth came to see him in deep distress of soul. Owen questioned him closely. "Young man, in what manner do you think to go to God?" "Through the Mediator, sir," was the reply. "Ah! that is easily said, but I assure you it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator than many who make use of the expression are aware of. I myself preached Christ some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ, until the Lord was pleased to visit me with affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness, when God graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of the words of the psalmist, 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'" That is the testimony of the Puritan.

It is interesting to note, also, that the beginning of John Wesley's perception of justification by faith came from hearing this psalm sung in Saint Paul's Cathedral in London. Young Wesley, as

he listened to the singing of this message about forgiveness, had borne into his heart the great confidence that a man might know that his sins were forgiven and might rest in perfect peace, being justified by faith.

It is exceedingly important to note, in considering this promise of Jesus Christ, that the condition to forgiveness on the part of God is a forgiving heart in our own breasts. Our forgiveness is to come before God's does. So long as we cherish spite and revenge in our hearts toward our fellow men God cannot forgive us. Only the heart that has itself forgiven is in the proper attitude to receive divine forgiveness.

A missionary in Greenland tells of a young Greenlander who said to him one day, "I do love Jesus—I would do anything for him; how good of him to die for me!"

The missionary said to him, "Are you sure you would do anything for our dear Lord?"

"Yes, I would do anything for him. What can I do?"

The missionary, holding up the Bible before him, said. "This book says, 'Thou shalt do no murder.'"

"O, but that man killed my father."

"Our dear Lord himself says, 'If ye love me,

keep my commandments,' and this is one of them."

"O," exclaimed the Greenlander, "I do love Jesus! But I—I must——"

"Wait a little, calm yourself; think it well over, and then come and let me know."

He went out, but presently came back, saying, "I cannot decide; one moment I will, the next I will not. Help me to decide."

The missionary answered, "When you say, 'I will kill him,' it is the evil spirit trying to gain the victory. When you say, 'I will not kill him,' it is the Spirit of God striving within you."

And so, leading him gently along, the missionary led him to give up his murderous design. Accordingly, the Greenlander sent a message to the murderer of his father, telling him to come and meet him as a friend. The man came with kindness on his lips but with treachery in his heart. After he had stayed with him a while he asked the young man to come and visit him on his side of the river. To this the young Christian readily assented; but on returning to his boat he found that it had been pierced by a cleverly concealed hole, his enemy hoping thereby to destroy him. He stopped the hole and put off in his boat, which, to the surprise and wrath of the other, who had

climbed a high rock to see him drown, did not sink, but merrily breasted the waves. Then the young man shouted aloud to his enemy, "I freely forgive you, for our dear Lord has forgiven me."

Our forgiveness of others must be as thorough and genuine as we desire God's forgiveness to be toward us. Prince Bismarck was once requested by Count Enzenberg to write something in his album. The page on which he had to write contained the autographs of Guizot and Thiers. The former had written, "I have learned in my long life two rules of prudence. The first is, To forgive much; the second is, Never to forget." Under this Thiers had written, "A little forgetting would not detract from the sincerity of the forgiveness." Prince Bismarck added, "As for me, I have learned to forget much and to ask to be forgiven much."

Any man who proudly and stubbornly says, "I will never forgive," sets himself up to fight against God. No man ought ever to say he will not forgive another, no matter what the wrong has been, unless he is willing to forever go unforgiven of God.

There are many people who are destroying all their happiness for this world and locking the doors of heaven against themselves in the world to

come, because their hearts are hard and unforgiving. Many a man has stood at the very door of mercy, deeply convicted of sin, ready to enter into the open door and be saved, who has turned away again in sadness because he was not willing to forgive some one whom he thought had wronged him. You must forgive or be banished from heaven. What folly to allow this vile passion of hate to eat out your eternal peace!

There is an old classic story of a Spartan boy who, having stolen a fox, kept him under his coat, though the fox was gnawing his vitals and letting out his lifeblood. He submitted to it rather than expose his wrong deed. So there are many people proudly facing the world who have secret grudges and hatreds in their hearts which are gnawing away their very soul's hope. How infinitely wiser to forgive and to refuse to permit hatred to have a nesting place in the heart. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, earnestly says, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath"—which might mean not only that we should not sin against God by cherishing hate, but also the wise philosophy that vengeance cherished will rob our hours of rest of their sweetness. The true Christian heart refuses to cherish hatred at all, and by forgiving at once not only maintains its

own peace but often conquers the one who has done the wrong deed.

I have seen a story of an old colored woman who used to sell apples down in lower New York city. She was a most genuine Christian. One day she was going along the street with her basket of apples on her arm selling to whoever would buy. A rough sailor ran against her purposely and upset the basket, and stood back expecting to hear her scold and curse him frightfully; but she stooped down and picked up the apples, and said, "God forgive you, my son, as I do." The sailor saw the meanness of his conduct, and pulled out a handful of silver and begged her to take it all. Though she was black, he called her mother, and said, "Forgive me, mother; I will never do anything so mean again." There is marvelous power in a forgiving spirit to pluck the sting out of wrath and spread abroad the heavenly atmosphere of love.

The weighty message of this text is that every man sets his own standard. We are to be forgiven as we forgive. It is a solemn thought and one that may well give us pause.

When the phonograph first came into use Dr. Talmage talked into one in Baltimore. The cylinder containing the words was sent on to

Washington, and the next day, from another phonographic instrument, that cylinder, when turned, gave back to his astonished ears the very words he had uttered the day before, and with the same intonations. He was awed by the reflection that if you scold into a phonograph it will scold back. Pour mild words into a phonograph and it will return the gentleness. So society and the world and the church are phonographs. If we are sour and rough with them we shall get back as much as we give. And not only from man, but from God, we shall get back what we give. If we forgive our fellow men, God will forgive us; but if we will not forgive, he will not forgive us.

There is deep comfort in the certainty of the promise that if we do fulfill the conditions and forgive others God will forgive us. Nothing is stronger than this promise of Jesus, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." The forgiveness of others, to which we are persuaded by a sense of our own unworthiness and our own need of forgiveness from God, is in itself a surrender to our heavenly Father, and that is essential to our salvation. Once after a great naval battle between the French and English fleets, in which the English had been victorious and Lord Nelson had captured a French officer, the Frenchman as he

approached offered Lord Nelson his hand. Nelson replied, "First give me your sword, and then give me your hand." We must yield up the sword of our pride and our stubborn will before we have a right to the hand that was nailed to Calvary's cross for our redemption.

Thank God, when we are forgiven it is permanent. Our sin is blotted out forever. God declares that what he has forgiven shall be like that which is dropped overboard behind a man's back in the midst of the sea, that shall never be beheld again. One of the meanest things in the world is to pretend to forgive anyone for a wrong deed, and then, any time you get vexed with him, to twit him about it and bring it up to his attention. God will never do that. There is no meanness in the divine heart. If you have repented of your sins, and through faith in Jesus Christ, having a forgiving spirit yourself, have asked for God's forgiveness, then your sins are blotted out, and to go on worrying about them is to doubt God. I have no doubt there are some who hear me who from time to time are anxious and fretted for fear God does not forgive some special sin that seems unusually bad. That is a lack of faith in God. Trust him, in Jesus's name, and have peace. Your sins shall never haunt you again;

not even at the judgment day, when you stand before the great white throne, shall that sin be brought to light, for Jesus Christ shall stand as your defender and show your record made white by the blood of the Lamb.

Are there any here who are not forgiven, whose hearts are anxious and restless, whose hearts are bitter and sad? Then for you I have a message of hope. God is ready and willing to forgive you. If you have been cherishing a grudge against anyone, if you have been allowing bitterness to nest in your heart, put it out now. Determine here and now to put it all away, and at least on your part to let no unforgiving spirit remain. Then you will be on a basis to go before the mercy seat. O, how happy you might go away this evening if you would put all wrath and evil out of your soul, and, turning to God in the spirit of the prayer which Jesus taught us, seek the forgiveness of your sins! He will forgive all of them. He will blot them all out and give you freedom and peace.

III

THE PROMISE OF SYMPATHY

We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.—*Hebrews iv, 15.*

THE last part of this text explains the first. Christ is in sensitive touch with us in the temptations and trials of life because he has personally experienced them. He is not a stranger, standing off on the ramparts of heaven, looking down, though it be ever so benevolently, upon sorrows and difficulties which he has never personally known. Such compassion could not mean much to us. But Jesus Christ perfected himself as the Captain of our salvation through suffering. For three and thirty years he wore our flesh and tasted our grief, and he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. How much that ought to mean to us!

When we are in any trial or trouble and need comfort it is not the most joyous and happy, who have never known sorrow, to whom we go for sympathy. There was a woman whose little child

very suddenly died in her arms. It was her only child, and the very idol of her heart. She was stunned by her grief. She could not even cry. The fountain of tears seemed to be frozen. She would not let anybody take the body of her child out of her arms. Her husband lovingly tried to comfort her, and sought to persuade her to give the child to him, but she would not. For hours she held the little body close to her breast, her face full of untold agony. At last the husband thought of a neighbor down the street who had lost a little child not long before, about the same age as their little one. He went to her and told her of the awful sorrow that had come to their home and the sad condition of his wife, and begged her to come and see if she would know how to comfort her. The woman came and quietly went in, and without a word sat down beside the poor grief-dazed mother, put her arm around her, her own tears rolling down over her cheeks, and kissed her, and simply said, "I know all about it, dear." The face of the mother softened in a moment. The refreshing tears came to her eyes; her frozen heart melted in her bosom, and she held the body of the child out to her neighbor, and said, "I can give it to you. I could not give it to anyone else, for they did not know."

So no one could be a Saviour for us who had not suffered. No one could have compassion on us in our weakness who had not himself been tempted and tried as by fire. Only a man who has been hungry, and has not known where to lay his head at times, knows how to sympathize perfectly with the man out of work and out of money. Only he who has been unpopular, and abused, and lonely, knows how to sympathize with others who are in similar experience. Only he who has been in the wilderness with the devil, tempted on every side, struggling for his life, knows how to sympathize and have true compassion with tempted men and women to-day. Only he who has been crowned with thorns, who has been spit upon and whipped with the scourge, who has fainted under his cross, knows real compassion, how to be touched with the feeling of people who are lashed by cruel misfortunes and who are fainting under burdens too heavy for their shoulders. But Jesus Christ meets all these requirements. He knows all about it.

The incarnation of Jesus was no sham. He wore our humanity completely, and there never was a more perfectly sensitive human nature, one more tender and exquisite in human feelings, than that of Jesus Christ. As has been well said,

Christ affected none of that hard indifference in which some ancient philosophers vainly gloried. He felt as a man, and he sympathized with the feelings of others. On different occasions we are informed that he was troubled in spirit, that he groaned, and that he wept. The story of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane exhibits a striking picture of the sensations of innocent nature oppressed with anguish. It discovers all the conflict between the dread of suffering on the one hand and the sense of duty on the other; the man struggling for a while with human weakness and in the end rising superior and winning the victory. We hear the Saviour say, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." There is the dread of suffering natural on all our lips. But the next moment we hear Christ saying, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Thy will be done." So our Saviour was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. His whole life was an experience of the ordinary trials and provocations that lead to evil, and these were sometimes aggravated into the most intense temptations. He was made the target of all the arrows of Satan. But, though he was tempted in all points, he came off victorious and without sin.

These reflections bring us to appreciate the fact that Christ is ideally perfect as a friend and Saviour for us in the weaknesses and infirmities with which our lives in this world are familiar. We may comfort ourselves with the assurance of several very inspiring reflections.

First: Christ, being touched with the feeling of our infirmities, will make a distinction between what is weak and what is willfully wrong in us. Jesus gives us a very beautiful illustration of this in his treatment of the disciples, those three close friends, Peter and James and John, whom he took with him into the garden of Gethsemane on the night of his betrayal. He said to them, as the burden of sorrow pressed upon him, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." And then he went away a little by himself and fell on his face in prayer, and after a time he came back, wishing the comfort of the association with his friends. And behold, they were all asleep. They aroused at his step, and Jesus said to Peter, "What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Then Jesus, in the tenderness of his great heart feeling sympathy and compassion toward them, begins to apologize for them and explain to them their weak-

ness: "The spirit indeed is willing," he says, "but the flesh is weak." Was there ever greater tenderness? One can easily imagine the sarcasm of Napoleon or Frederick the Great on such an occasion. But could anything more clearly illustrate the tenderness of Christ in distinguishing between our weakness and willful wrongdoing? We may be sure that Christ will never misjudge us. If we are doing the best we can he knows it and appreciates it to its full value. He sees every battle we make, even when we are defeated, and knows the motive behind every blow that is struck in his name. He will never reject or look with indifference or contempt on any effort we make to serve him because of infirmities which make us to blush. What we speak in words are not the only prayers Christ hears, but every secret aspiration and longing for goodness or for helpful service is a prayer which he hears and answers. There is no eloquence of human lips that can compare with the penitential tears shed in secret, springing from sincere meditation upon our duty to God and heartfelt longing that we may render him truer service.

Second: Jesus, knowing our infirmities, will not allow us to be burdened more heavily than we are able to bear. He will not allow us to be tempted in such a way that there is no escape for

us. He will not permit us to be loaded, unless we bring it on ourselves by our own sin, with unnecessary troubles. His message about burdens is infinitely tender: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." In regard to temptation, we have the direct promise that his grace shall be sufficient for us, and that in every temptation he will make a way for our escape, so that both in our sorrow and in our danger Christ, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, stands ready to comfort and defend us. We shall go through no path so lonely or uncertain but we may find marks to show us, if we really seek for them, that Christ has been over the way first. Alexander Maclaren recalls the customs of pioneers in trackless lands, how when one friend passes through pathless forests he breaks a branch ever and anon as he goes, that those who come after may see the traces of his having been there, and may know that they have not lost the trail. So when we are journeying through the murky night and the dark woods of affliction and sorrow it is a precious thing to find here and there a broken branch or a leafy

stem bent down with the tread of Christ's foot and the kindly thoughtfulness of his hand as he passed, to remember that the path he trod he has hallowed, to find lingering fragrances and hidden strength in the knowledge that he was tempted in all points like as we are, bearing grief for us, bearing grief with us, bearing grief like us.

Third: As angels comforted Jesus in his sorrows, so he will succor us in our trials and weaknesses. How tenderly Jesus prayed for us before he offered himself upon the cross as an atonement for our sins! In that tender prayer, in which he expressly stated that it was not only for his disciples but for all who should believe on him through their words to the end of the world, and therefore includes us, the Saviour prays: "Now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, thine they were, and thou gavest them me. Keep them through thine own name. Sanctify them through thy truth. Keep them from the evil one; that they may be where I am, and may behold the glory which thou hast given me."

How tender Christ was to people in hard places during his earthly ministry! Recall his journey to visit Martha and Mary when their brother Lazarus was dead. Remember the kindness to the

poor woman who touched his garments as the crowd pressed about him. In these and multitudes of other cases how conspicuous the tenderness and sensitive compassion of Jesus Christ in comforting those who are tried and troubled. Surely there could be nothing more attractive to us, nothing which could more perfectly appeal to our confidence and to our faith than the character and the story of Jesus our Saviour as set forth in the Word of God. How can we help crying out with Oliver Wendell Holmes:

"O Love divine, that stooped to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitterest tear!
On thee we cast each earthborn care;
We smile at pain while thou art near.

"Though long the weary way we tread,
And sorrow crown each lingering year,
No path we shun, no darkness dread,
Our hearts still whispering, 'Thou art near!'

"When drooping pleasure turns to grief,
And trembling faith is changed to fear,
The murmuring wind, the quivering leaf,
Shall softly tell us, 'Thou art near!'

"On thee we fling our burdening woe,
O Love divine, forever dear;
Content to suffer while we know,
Living and dying, thou art near!"

IV

THE PROMISE OF ANSWERS TO PRAYER

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.—*James* v, 16.

MORE people believe in the efficacy of prayer than in any other one thing on the earth; and yet we know less about it than we do about anything else concerning which there is large agreement. It is like electricity. Edison, who has had greater success in dealing with it than anyone else who has ever lived, recently said: "Electricity is as much a mystery to me now as when I first touched a telegrapher's key." If his life depended upon it, he could not tell you whether electricity is mere force, like gravitation, or is as material as granite. And if this wizard of our time was able to answer these questions for us, that mystery of all physical mysteries, the nature of force and matter, would still remain to be solved.

A recent writer puts pithily the statement that of all religions Christianity makes most of prayer because it makes most of the personality of God. The aims of other religions is to remove God to

an infinite distance; the aim of Christianity is to bring man nearer to his Maker. According to the Bible, the divinest attribute of God is not his power, but his love; not his sovereignty, but his fatherhood.

Sincere prayer is love-making between the human soul and God. In the very nature of things it must be personal and informal in order to be in the highest sense prayer. Henry Ward Beecher once said humorously, but not irreverently, that he had "as soon go a-courting with his father's old love-letters as pray in another man's forms of supplication." His idea, of course, was that prayer is, above all things, a personal communion between an individual soul and God. And when we pray in public our prayers are only helpful and spiritually inspiring when we forget the congregation as hearers and personally commune with our heavenly Father.

Our text is very interesting in its suggestions as to the proper preparation of the heart to fit us for effectual prayer. "Confess your faults one to another" precedes the prayer which we shall make for our brethren. A tender, forgiving, humble, considerate spirit toward our fellow men properly attunes the heart for communion with God and for effectual prayer.

The reason why there have been men of great intelligence and much knowledge who have been bitter disbelievers in prayer is because they failed at this very point of preparation of heart. Marconi's discovery of wireless telegraphy has already gone beyond the experimental stage, and while we yet speak of it with wonder, all civilized nations accept it as a certainty. We know that he is able to speak wireless telegraph messages from Great Britain or from America across three thousand miles of ocean. Many are beginning to discuss the possibility that his discovery may yet supersede all cables, telephones, and ordinary telegraph by wire. And yet, though this is the greatest wonder for a hundred years, it is, like most of the other wonders, very simple. His instruments set in motion certain waves in that ether which pervades and surrounds our globe. These waves, like the ripples in a pond when a stone is cast into it, spread in every direction, and when they reach any receiver, far or near, tuned to take them, they give their message to it. A receiver not tuned to the proper pitch, however, is useless; the subtle ether waves pass it by to give their message elsewhere. Thus a hundred messages may reach a tuned receiver with absolute certainty, while one wrongly tuned misses them all.

This physical wonder has its value as an illustration of communication between God and the human soul. Here is a man, well educated intellectually, strong and forceful on the physical side, yet he declares that the Bible is false and that it is impossible that God should have talked with Abraham, or Jacob, or Joseph, or David, or Elijah, or Jesus, or Paul. He will not believe that these men could have been divinely inspired of God to speak or write messages which a heavenly Father communicates for the good of his children. He will not believe that God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai the ten great words of the Law. And why will he not believe? Purely and simply because God has never spoken to him. He can hear the voice of his fellow man; he can hear the music of the wind and the songs of birds; but, listen as he will, he never hears the voice of God. Why does he not hear? Because his receiver, his heart, is not attuned to receive a message from God. Let him come with the meekness of Moses, with the faith of Abraham, with the prostrate humility of Elijah, with the heart-broken confession of David, with the ready repentance of Paul, and his heart shall be so transformed and attuned that it shall be prepared to receive and register the message from heaven.

I doubt not that some of you who listen to me have been troubled because the heavens have seemed silent to you, and though to some extent the putting forth of your heart to God in prayer has not been without its comfort and its satisfaction, yet you have missed the answering peace and assurance for which your soul longs. If such is the case, let us face the great truth, the solemn truth, that full and complete answers to prayer must all depend upon the receiver—that is, your own heart and mind. God is never dumb or deaf to the appeals of his children. There are no aristocrats among the children of God, who may receive answers while more humble ones are made to wait. No, indeed; though a woman be as poor and humble as the widow of Sarepta, though a man be of as little earthly account as Lazarus whose afflicted body the dogs licked at the gate of Dives, God listens for her prayer and for his appeal, and does not fail in answering food or answering angels to bring about their good. Do not fail of the full teaching of our illustration. Here is a Marconi instrument set up on Cape Cod waiting for messages, but it is out of tune. The messages come over the waters, but it is silent and deaf, and receives nothing. Other instruments receive the message; but, work as he will, the

operator gets no register from this receiver that is out of tune. So other people are having answers to prayer. You look upon their contented faces; you hear their words of confidence; you feel their spirit of self-sacrificing fidelity to God, and you know that prayer to them is real and is charged with constant comfort and blessing. But your heart is cold, to you the prayer meeting is as nothing, and if you engage in secret prayer it is only as a duty. If you ask me where the trouble is I must answer, getting my answer from God's Word, that the trouble is with the spiritual receiver—your own heart. Get your heart in tune, through repentance and confession of sin and faith in Jesus Christ as your Saviour, and the messages will come straight and clear and keep on coming every day.

You remember that old temple where Hannah consecrated her little boy, Samuel, to be brought up under the care of the prophet Eli. The boy's heart was innocent; from his babyhood his soul had looked up confidingly into the face of God, and when Eli tells him that the Lord wants to speak to him, and the voice calls again, "Samuel, Samuel!" you see the little fellow as he stands up beside his couch and answers sweet and clear and wondering, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant hear-

eth." Let us see to it that our hearts are in tune to receive the message from God.

Let us look carefully at this suggestion which James gives us as a method of preparation for effectual prayer. "Confess your faults one to another." James was the brother of our Lord, and a very outspoken, genuine man. This entire book of James is famous for the clear-cut, heart-searching way it has in dealing with the life people really live every day. And this suggestion means that if we are going to pray to God we must be frank and open-hearted and honest about ourselves. We must not go around hiding sins in our heart. That will at once put the heart out of tune, so that it can receive no message from heaven. Bishop Temple once said that the chief benefit of being ready to confess faults which our conscience urges us to confess is that we clear our own minds and strengthen our own wills. A concealed fault has the malignant power of infecting the whole character. The sin while it is concealed enters into all you think or do. It becomes a part of yourself. You cannot say, as Paul did, "It is not I that did it, but sin that dwelleth in me." The very fact of your concealing your sin makes it peculiarly your own. It is not your fault merely; it is you. But the moment

you confess your sin and renounce it, your heart becomes honest before God and man. You may have a long struggle yet in getting rid of it, but you get the poison out of your blood and you henceforth carry an honest heart in your breast.

It is not only true that a sin hidden in the soul poisons your life; it becomes also a heavy burden on your heart. You have a sense of shame for having hidden it, and you come to despise yourself in the midst of praise that you may win from others. You may make all the pledges and resolutions you please, so long as you are hiding sin in your heart, and they will be weak and wavering. But a confession of sin which renounces it and turns from it forever, with a whole-hearted consecration to God, casts off its burden upon Him who careth for the sinner.

We need to keep in mind that this is not only confession toward God, but living humbly toward our fellow men. If we live proudly and arrogantly toward them, we have not a fit heart to pray God for them. The self-righteous Pharisee who stands and thanks God that he is not like the poor publican is in no fit mood to pray for the poor publican or for himself. But that poor publican who smites upon his breast and cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" has by that very attitude

of his soul brought himself not only into sympathy with God, but also into sympathy with his fellow men.

There is nothing sweeter about a life of prayer than the privilege of praying for others. No Christian ever receives a higher compliment, nor one that makes him more truly humble, than when one who has known his manner of living by daily contact comes and asks him in deep sincerity to intercede for him or her at the throne of grace. Dr. Torrey tells about a little girl of fourteen years who came into one of his meetings in Australia. Entering the inquiry room just as the workers were leaving, she stepped up timidly to a Christian woman who had been talking with inquirers and said, "Please, ma'am, I was told to ask to see Mrs. ——. My friend said she knew Jesus so well." Do you know Jesus so well that anyone full of soul-hunger and longing to know the Saviour's pardoning love would think of you in that way?

One other thought. The direct promise in this last phrase of our text. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." If James had left it just there who, after all, would be able to get comfort out of that scripture? Who would feel like standing up and saying be-

fore God that he is a perfectly righteous man? Who, conscious of the infirmity and weakness of the flesh, conscious of his proneness to evil, would feel justified in making that claim? But James in the next verse illustrates what he means. He says that "Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." Now, Elijah was a man, as James says, with many weaknesses and imperfections; but at heart he was righteous. The dominant purpose of his soul was to do the will of God and to bless his fellow man. This made him powerful with God in prayer, and if we live in the same spirit and purpose we may be a great blessing to our fellows by praying for them.

Surely I do not need to pile up illustrations or incidents to prove that God hears prayer. If you could speak out there would come from almost every pew in the church reminiscences tender and sweet and holy that would tell how amid the sins and sorrows and struggles of your life, often when broken and defeated in your own strength, your humility and sense of weakness have attuned your souls to hear the whispered messages from heaven.

Thank God, the way is still open. The spiritual laws by which the patriarchs and the prophets, the apostles and the martyrs, and our own fathers and mothers talked with God are the same yesterday and to-day and forever. God give us wisdom that we may live prayerful lives, thus walking in the strength of Heaven and obtaining blessings for all about us!

V

THE PROMISE OF PEACE

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.—*Isaiah* xxvi, 3.

THIS is a very beautiful promise, and the essence of it is in that word “stayed.” It suggests a humble alertness to the will of God, a watchfulness that hearkens to God’s command and holds itself steady by constant reliance upon the goodness of God. Humility and confidence in God—there is the secret of peace.

An English missionary in Africa tells a story of “God and the Animals” which African mothers repeat to their children. The story is that once upon a time the animals had no water to drink. So an assembly of representatives of the various species was called, and they held a consultation.

Then the Elephant said, “We have food in abundance, but God has neglected to give us even a single well of water whereat we may quench our thirst. Come, let us go together to God and beg for water, lest we perish for lack of it.”

To this all agreed, and they arose and commenced their journey up the steep mountain track which led to the dwelling place of God.

After proceeding a short distance they heard footsteps coming behind them. Looking back, they saw the Tortoise hurrying after them.

"Stay," said the Buffalo; "let us wait until he comes up to us, and then give him a sound thrashing for his impudence in seeking to associate himself with us."

Presently the Tortoise came up, fearing no evil.

"Good day, friends," said he; "will you allow me to join your deputation, and put in a plea for water on behalf of my tribe? For sorely, indeed, do we need it."

"What impudence!" said the Leopard, striking a blow at the Tortoise's head, which he cleverly avoided by withdrawing into his shell, "to venture to place himself on an equality with us!"

So saying, he picked up the inoffensive Tortoise and flung him into a thorn bush; and the cavalcade proceeded on their journey.

Soon recovering himself, the Tortoise picked his way out of the thorn bush and followed in the track of the other animals, keeping, however, at a distance for fear of further ill-treatment.

At length the animals stood in the presence of God, and they cried out, saying, "O God, we are dying with thirst; give us water, we beseech thee."

And God said, "Go your way, pull up the acacia tree, and you shall find water at its roots."

So they departed. And when they had gone, the Tortoise, which had kept out of sight while the other animals were speaking with God, came forward, and God said, "What do you want here, Tortoise?"

And he said, "I have come to beg water for my tribe, lest we perish with thirst."

And God replied, "Have I not already told your companions to dig at the root of an acacia tree and they will find water?"

So the Tortoise arose and went his way.

Now, on their way down the mountain the other animals had all forgotten the name of the tree which God had told them to pull up. When they reached the plain their friends gathered around to learn how they had fared.

"God has told us," said the Buffalo, "to pull up a certain tree, and we shall find water at its root. Come, friend Elephant, you are stronger than any of us; you shall pull up the tree for us. It was the fig tree, was it not, that we were told?"

"No," said the Elephant, "it was the plantain."

"No, no," came from a dozen voices at once, and each animal had a different tree to suggest.

"Well," said the Elephant, "it is no use arguing. I will pull them all up, and then we are sure to find the water."

His labor, however, was all in vain; not a drop of water could be found. Then the representatives of the various species began to quarrel, each blaming the other for having forgotten the name of the tree which would save them all from perishing.

As the turmoil was getting noisier, and threatening to end in a general fight, the Tortoise came up, and, learning the cause of the disturbance, said, "Let me point out the tree for you. Come, friend Elephant, pull up the acacia tree."

The animals all laughed at this, and the Elephant replied, "Do you suppose, Tortoise, that you know better than all of us? Has not your experience in the thorn bush taught you wisdom? Be off, or a worse fate will be yours, you audacious reptile."

"Nay," meekly replied the Tortoise, "just pull up this one tree as I ask you, and if you do not find water at its roots kill me at once, as a creature which is, indeed, no longer fit to live."

So the Elephant consented, and pulled up the acacia tree; and there, rapidly rising in the hollow that was made, was seen a bubbling spring of crystal water. Then all the animals sang the praises of the Tortoise, as they slaked their burning thirst; and ever after he was highly esteemed by great and small.

That simple little story has in it a vein of eternal truth. The secrets of life are not to be found in the great books nor by digging at complex problems; they cannot be purchased for gold nor dug out of the wisdom of the sages. No, life's greatest secret is a plain, simple, open lesson that a wayfaring man though a fool need not err in as he runs. The great secret of peace is in humble reliance upon God—the simple life that does God's will; as our text states it, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee."

There are several reasons why this is true. First, because the man whose mind is stayed on God does not fear the result of past sins. He knows that his sins are forgiven. Sin is the great destroyer of peace. Archbishop Leighton said, "So much sin as gets in, so much peace will go out." One of the greatest causes of unrest and lack of peace is the consciousness of sin and the

fear of results that will be disastrous. A very striking thing is said by one of the writers of the Old Testament in describing the good man—"He shall not be afraid of evil tidings." How many people there are who never pass a day or a night without fear of evil tidings. Many people live in such a network of falsehood or of insincere conduct, have so many deeds that they would not dare have brought to light, that they are forever afraid something will go wrong, and they live shuddering and unhappy lives because of it. There can be no peace to a soul like that. The author of our text says again in another place: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But the heart that trusts God through Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins enters into peace. There is no longer fear, since the mind is stayed upon God.

In the second place, the heart that is stayed upon God has peace because there is no fear of earthly misfortune. Changes may come, but the mind stayed on God rests in this, that God is a Father. He has infinite power and wisdom and love. He will not permit any misfortune to come to the child that loves him and trusts him and obeys him. Any trial or loss that seems like a

misfortune cannot really be one. It must be a blessing in disguise. And so we see multitudes of people who, in the midst of what to others would be soul-racking sorrows, maintain perfect peace and cheerfulness. The secret is open and simple. They trust God, and fear not.

A third reason for the peace which comes to the mind which is stayed upon God is that there is no fear of trials which shall be too great. God has promised that to those who trust him no trial shall come greater than they are able to bear. Much of the lack of peace which comes to those who with more or less earnestness are endeavoring to live the Christian life is because they do not steady their hearts on this promise of God. They look abroad and see certain happenings to other people which they feel if they were to come to them they could not bear up under, and so they begin to forebode and to dread and to be anxious instead of relying upon God to keep his word. Steady your soul on God and such fears will not trouble you.

In the fourth place, the soul that steadies itself on God does not fear death nor the future. To such a one death is only the messenger who comes to open the door into immortality. God who has been good to us in this world may be trusted to be good to us in the world to come. The fear of

death is a great source of unrest. Many people will not go to a funeral, will not permit themselves to drive past a cemetery if they know it, and will not allow anyone to talk of death in their presence. Nothing can be more foolish. How infinitely better it is to give our hearts in perfect surrender and confidence to our heavenly Father, to live day by day in harmony with his will, keep his commandments, and prayerfully do what he asks us to do, so that death can only bring us the more perfectly into his presence. We cannot escape death by refusing to speak the word. Death is just as much a part of human life as is birth. The only way to treat death sensibly and reasonably is to master it and enter into possession of it and make it one of our treasures. Paul speaks of it in that way when he says: "All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's." You cannot for a moment comprehend a man's being tormented and distressed by fear of death, and what may come after death, whose mind is stayed upon God in a faith like that.

Men make a bad bargain when they exchange their peace for any bribe which the world, the

flesh, or the devil has to offer. What folly it is to trade peace for pleasure. Pleasure is the froth at the top of the glass. Peace is the elixir of life. Dives, about whom Jesus tells us, had pleasure. He lived in a fine house and fared sumptuously every day. We might imagine from the details of the story that he kept a large pack of hunting dogs and was a sporting man. But though he had a great deal of pleasure he had no peace. Now, Lazarus, on the other hand, had no pleasures. It was no pleasure to lie down at the gate full of sores and receive the pittance doled out to him by charity. It was no pleasure to see the contemptuous looks that Dives cast at him, the man who refused him even the crumbs that fell from his table. But in spite of the lack of pleasure, Lazarus was much the happier man of the two, for he had peace. He was a good man; there was no remorse to haunt him with sins unforgiven. His conscience was void of offense toward God and man. He was poor, pitifully poor, so poor that the ordinary pleasures of life were impossible; but the peace of God was in his heart. And when the brief span of life was over, and the messenger of death came about the same time for both Dives and Lazarus, then was revealed the vast superiority of peace over pleasure. Dives's pleas-

ures were all of this world, and when they were gone his sins claimed their wages. He found himself among the torments of those whose sins drive them from the presence of God. In the far off he sees Lazarus, and to his astonishment the poor old beggar has found his youth and his joy. He is in intimate association with men like Abraham. But the gulf between them is impossible to be crossed.

My dear friend, which will you have, pleasure or peace? The devil is constantly promising those who give themselves to sin that they shall have pleasure; but the pleasures of sin are only the scaffolding within which Satan builds an evil habit, and when once that habit has fastened itself upon you the scaffolding of pleasure will be taken down, but the vampire of sin will remain. On the other hand, the peace which comes to a heart stayed upon God is a beautiful thing that grows more satisfying as the years go on. It is sweet amid childhood's innocence, more beautiful still amid the vigor of girlhood or boyhood, increases in strength and fragrance in young manhood or young womanhood; in mature life is like the current of a mighty river shining in the sun, and is the one thing that can redeem old age from all its terrors. Old age, shrinking, timid, afraid, about

to take a leap into the dark, is a terrible thing; but old age, strong-hearted, cherishing happy memories, full of prayer and thanksgiving, looking toward the future with eyes like Paul's, crying out in exultation, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day!"—an old age like that is glorious beyond all the power of words to describe. Such an old age is within the reach of every one of us who will hearken to the message of our text and with all our will-power center our thoughts and purposes and plans upon God.

VI

THE PROMISE OF FRIENDSHIP

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—*John* xv, 14.

DR. H. CLAY TRUMBULL, who has written a beautiful book entitled *Friendship the Master-Passion*, defines friendship as being love for another because of what that other is in himself, or for that other's sake, and not because of what that other is to the loving one. According to this expert, friendship is love with the selfish element eliminated. It is an outgoing and an ongoing affection, wholly and inherently disinterested, and in no sense contingent upon any reciprocal relation between its giver and its object, nor yet upon its return or recognition. Friendship, in short, is love apart from love's claim or love's craving. This is pure friendship, friendship without alloy. This is friendship at its truest and best; and this it is that makes the best and truest friendship so rare, so difficult of conception, so liable to misconception.

According to this writer, in all holiest and most

unselfish love friendship is the purest element of the affection. No love in any relation of life can be at its best if the element of friendship be lacking, and no love can transcend, in its possibilities of noble and ennobling exaltation, a love that is pure friendship.

In order that we may get the full comfort provided for us in this promise of the friendship of Jesus Christ, it is necessary for us to consider the possibilities of friendship. One of the characteristics of friendship is that it consists in loving rather than in being loved. How beautifully Whittier puts it:

“Love is sweet in any guise;
But its best is sacrifice.

“He who giving does not crave,
Likest is to Him who gave
Life itself the loved to save.”

Moses brings out the same thought when in telling of God's love toward Israel he says: “The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you.” And that same disposition to love a friend, even when the returns are very poor, is an attribute of the strongest and best men

and women. When General Grant was President of the United States his administration was brought to the verge of ruin because of friends whom he had trusted but who had proved unworthy. When asked by some one why he would stand by his friend when he was wrong, the great man quietly said that that was when his friend most needed him.

If we apply this thought to the friendship of Jesus it is very comforting to every Christian. Jesus saw something in us that he wished to make friends with. We did not choose him, he chose us. First of all, he proved his friendship by giving his life for us, and Christ himself says that no man can have greater love than that. But he has chosen us, and called us personally to be his friends, and he loves us, not because we are perfect, for we are not; he loves us, and he is seeking to bring us, because of that love, into perfect fellowship with himself.

True friendship is entirely unselfish. The friend loves his friend, and longs to bring to him blessing, without thought of the result to himself. One of the most remarkable illustrations of this unselfish character of friendship is seen in the beautiful story of David and Jonathan. When David came to the headquarters of Saul's army a

comparatively unknown shepherd lad, and by his heroism proved himself the greatest man in Israel, Jonathan gave his heart to him. Now, Jonathan was the crown prince of the realm. He was the heir apparent to his father's throne. The growing popularity of David, the applause which he was winning as a hero, could not but in the very nature of things be a threat against Jonathan's coming to his rightful place as king. No one could have known this better than Jonathan himself. But the noble young fellow refused to allow jealousy or envy or selfishness to have anything to do with his feeling toward David. He loved David. Jonathan himself was a hero, a brave and daring spirit who had proved his heroic qualities on many a battlefield; but he felt that in David he had found his master. In him was everything he loved and admired and adored in a young man, and so he gave him his love and his friendship.

The shepherd lad, though he has slain Goliath and is the talk of the army, has no clothes proper for a young officer or weapons befitting the new position to which Saul has raised him. Jonathan cannot bear to have him humiliated, so what does he do? Do? Why, he plays the friend's part—takes him into his own tent, brings out his best uniform, makes David wear it; takes his own

sword, the one thing he cares more for than anything in the world, and hangs it at David's side. And in the days that followed he was true to David. He even risked his own life in incurring the wrath of the king in order to save David. He was entirely unselfish in all this. There never was a time while Jonathan lived that David was able to give him back anything except his affection. But Jonathan was not working for what David could do for him, but for what he could do for David.

Take this beautiful story and apply it to the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ for those who give themselves to him in obedient love. He will clothe us from his own wardrobe. He will cleanse us by his forgiving love and array us in the graces of his own beautiful character. He will give us the same armor with which he contended against all the temptations and trials of human life and came off conqueror. He will give us the same sword which he wore—the sword of the Spirit. He will be with us in every struggle, and we shall never win a victory but his shall be the most inspiring cheer that falls upon our ears. He will never be jealous of us. He will never envy us, and every victory will please him more than it pleases us.

History is full of illustrations of the power of a genuine friendship to develop in a man or a woman the very best possibilities. Men who have been but commonplace have become heroes under the touch of a noble friendship. During the civil war in America there are many cases recorded where a friend slipped into the place of a soldier condemned to die, or who was to take a great risk, heroically taking the friend's doom or danger upon himself.

Charles Dickens never painted a more inspiring picture than the illustration of this power of friendship to make a hero out of ordinary material. He tells us the story of Sidney Carton, who lived an aimless, useless life, wasting all his opportunities and powers, until he was aroused to a sense of something better and holier by a sentiment of purest friendship for Lucie Manette. It was no craving love, no love with the hope or expectation of possession, that developed, enlarged, and ennobled the soul of Sidney Carton as it went out toward Lucie Manette in an unselfish friendship for her. This friendship was born of what she was in herself, and not because of what she was or ever could be to him. It was a love that included all whom she loved for her sake, and it steadily transformed Sidney Carton into a

higher personality. The time came when Charles Darnay, the husband of Lucie Manette, was sentenced to the guillotine during the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution. Then it was that Sidney Carton managed to enter the cell of the condemned man, and to exchange places with him, sending him out to rejoin his wife and child in liberty, all unconscious of the cost of his escape, Carton going in his stead to the deadly block. And as this hero-friend passed along the streets to his execution he was ministering religious comfort, in the spirit of self-forgetful friendship, to a gentle girl who was his fellow sufferer; and his last words to her were the assuring words of the Friend of friends: "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." The people who looked on as he went to death said of him that it was "the peacefulest man's face" ever beheld there.

If we apply this characteristic of friendship to the promised friendship of Jesus for us we shall find in it great blessing and comfort. If we are the friends of Jesus and give him full sway to awake in our hearts this master passion, it will develop in us everything that is noble and splendid

and sublime. O, the inspiring power of friendship for Jesus Christ to transform men and women! It has taken a useless drunkard and made him into a prince of orators like John B. Gough or John G. Woolley. It has taken a blasphemous ruffian and changed him into a classic writer like John Bunyan. It has taken a bigoted, cruel persecutor and transformed him into an unselfish and gentle-hearted missionary like the apostle Paul. It has taken a poor jail bird and river thief and made him over into the soul-winner, Jerry McAuley. And, to use the words of the writer of the book of Hebrews, "time would fail us" to call over the famous names of history, in the pulpit, among singers of the gospel, among statesmen and soldiers, who out of wickedness and depravity have been lifted, inspired, glorified by the supreme touch of friendship for Christ that has made them willing, yes, gladly willing, to risk their lives that they might show their friendship for their divine Lord. The possibility of heroic living is in every one of us, and the best way to bring it out is to give ourselves unfalteringly to a whole-hearted friendship for Jesus.

One other characteristic of a true friendship, only, can we notice, and that is that it is changeless amid all the changes of life. A passionate

love is often a consuming flame that soon burns itself out. Any sort of relation that requires give and take, any relation in which we are seeking to get back as much as we give, is liable to be only temporary. But a sincere and genuine friendship, which is built not on what we can get, but on what we can give, will never die.

We were talking but just now of Jonathan's beautiful exhibition of friendship for David. But there is another story, a sequel to that, which shows us that David was worthy of that beautiful love. After Saul and Jonathan were slain, and David came to be king, he did not content himself by doing honor to Jonathan's memory, by writing a beautiful poem about him, declaring that Jonathan's love for him surpassed even the love of women; no, David went further than that to show his friendship for Jonathan. He made diligent inquiry to find if any of Jonathan's children were yet alive, and he found that there was one, a poor crippled fellow. When he was a baby, a nurse, running with him to save his life, dropped him, and he was crippled ever afterward. This poor fellow, whose name was Mephibosheth, and his family—for he was now a grown man—were living in trembling retirement, hiding to escape public notice, fearing that after the hard manner of

the times they might be put to death as claimants of the throne. David at once sent and had them brought, gave them rooms in his palace, had them eat at his own table, and declared that for Jonathan's sake they should always dwell in the king's household.

We might spiritualize this in either of two ways. We might make it suggestive as to the treatment our King will give us in feeding us at his own table on the Bread of Life. But there is a natural suggestion which ought to be inspiring to us that comes from the other side. David was kind to Jonathan's son because Jonathan had risked his own life for David. Christ has given his life for us. Has he anyone left behind whom he loves, to whom by showing kindness we may at the same time show our friendship for Jesus Christ? Yes, indeed; he himself has said that whatever we shall do to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit the prisoner, or minister to the sick, among his brethren and sisters who are in trouble, though they be the most insignificant, so that they are counted the very least among the citizens of the town, he will regard it tenderly, and in the last great day of days will say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

VII

THE PROMISE OF HOPE

The hope of the righteous shall be gladness.—
Proverbs x, 28.

HOPE has been called the sunshine of the mind. Like the old sundial of Saint Mark's in Venice, it marks only the cloudless hours. It leads life onward and buoys it with courage and strength. Thackeray calls hope "the nerve of life," and it is not a bad definition. God is called "the God of hope" because in his perfect strength and wisdom he is never cast down or depressed, but ever full of the sunshine and courage of certain victory. True hope is not a thing depending upon outward circumstances. It is a creature of the soul. It is born within, and it is only the blossoming, the result, which we see in the outer life. Our text suggests that. The wise man wrote, "The hope of the righteous shall be gladness." And the reason is because his hope is founded on his righteousness. A man does right. He does his duty to God. He pleases God, and his hope is founded upon the promises of God to sustain and keep and bring him to final victory.

The most powerful factor for good in this world is Christian hope. Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, gives a suggestion of the reason for this when he says, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Paul's thought was that in answer to our opening the door of the heart Christ comes and dwells in the heart, in our thoughts, in our imaginations, in our purposes, in all our sympathies, and there is born in the soul a hope of glory through our fellowship and kinship with Jesus Christ. And if we shall give ourselves up completely to that hope it will come to possess us so perfectly that all doubt and fear will be crowded out.

There is a legend of a man whose garden produced nothing but weeds, till at last he met with a strange foreign flower of singular vitality. The story is that he sowed a handful of this seed in his overgrown garden and left it to work its own sweet way. He slept, and rose, and knew not how the seed was growing, till, on a certain day, he opened the gate, and saw a sight which much astounded him. He knew that the seed would produce a dainty flower, and he looked for it; but he had little dreamed that the plant would cover the whole garden. So it was; the flower had exterminated every weed, till, as he looked from one end to the other, from wall to wall, he could see

nothing but the fair colors of that rare plant and smell nothing but its delicious perfume. The hope of glory through Jesus Christ will be like that plant. If you will but give Jesus the right of way in your heart, he will fill all the soil and crowd out every noxious weed of selfishness and choke to the death every sinful temper.

These two scriptures—our text, which declares that “the hope of the righteous shall be gladness,” and the words of Paul, which speak of “Christ in you, the hope of glory”—fit together beautifully. They teach us that gladness is the flower of hope. Hope is the bulb and gladness is the blossom. Christ in our hearts is the certain germ which causes hope to send forth its sprouts into the upper air of our everyday life. If you ask me how you can take Christ into your heart, I answer, “By faith and obedience.” Trust him, obey him, keep his commandments, and he will come and dwell in your heart till you shall care more to please him than anyone else in the world. And whenever that fact exists the hope of glory gladdens the soul and fills the life with its perfume.

David Hume, the English historian and noted enemy of the Christian faith, once overheard his servant-man John repeating the text, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” “You know that’s all

nonsense," said Hume; "I wonder that a sensible man like you can believe it. If Christ be in heaven, as you say, how can he be in you? He can't be in two places at one time. And then to be 'in you,' I don't understand it."

"David Hume," said John, "you wrote the History of England, and I read it page by page with great delight. You say in that history that the one redeeming feature in the life of 'Bloody Mary' was that when she was dying the news came to her that Calais had been captured and that on that occasion she raised herself up in bed and said to her maids of honor, 'When I die, take out my heart, and you will find "Calais" written on it.' Now, what more Calais written on Mary's heart than Christ on mine? Take out my heart, and you will find Christ written on it."

Is that true of you? Is Christ dwelling in your soul, the hope of glory?

The Christian's hope is gladness even in the midst of temptation and trial and hard experience. Hope is not only the nerve of life, but it is a great protection. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul calls hope a helmet. He says to these Christian friends that they should put on "the breastplate of righteousness, take the shield of faith, and for an helmet the hope of salvation." The helmet

was a very important part of the old armor. Goliath lost his life because he was careless about his helmet. David was such a little fellow, and the sling seemed such a useless weapon against a giant, that the big brute thought he did not need to look out for his helmet, and the smooth stone of the brook, slung with the force of the muscle of the shepherd boy's arm, struck him straight in the middle of the forehead, where his helmet should have protected him. So the helmet is an important feature of Christian armor. A wound in the head is a serious thing for a Christian. Some people make the mistake of thinking they can afford to read all kinds of books, see all sorts of pictures, go into all kinds of questionable associations, intellectually, without harm. There never was greater folly. God gives us our heads to use, not to idle with. But many men and women who sneer at the silly people who hang around the street corners loafing and simpering and giggling, like idle human geese, go themselves mooning about after all sorts of curiosities and seances, idling with their brains. It is a far more serious thing, too, for a man to go loafing with his brains than with his feet. But if we keep on as a helmet the "hope of salvation" through Jesus Christ, we shall have plenty to do and plenty to

think about to protect us against all the onslaughts of the enemy.

The head is in danger, too, of assaults in the way of mental depression. Life is a struggle, and in all struggles there will be times when it will take all the energy we have to overcome. The Christian will be tempted to feel that the odds are greatly against him, and that he is certain to be defeated. His protection in such an hour lies in his hope in God. That must be his helmet. David, in the forty-second psalm, gives us a beautiful illustration of how that works. He was in one of the darkest places of his life and had been sneered at as one forgotten of heaven. He exclaimed: "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance."

The hope of the righteous is gladness because it gives steadiness and assurance to the Christian, both for this world and the world to come. The

author of the book of Hebrews puts this in the strongest possible figure when he says, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."

There is nothing that will so steady a life and give gladness because of a sense of rest and confidence as the Christian hope. Sir Humphry Davy, a brilliant man of science of the eighteenth century, with almost everything that the world could give to make a man happy, once wrote to a friend, "There is but one person I envy upon earth, and that is the man who has a clear and fixed religious belief." He felt that he was "all at sea," without a rudder and without an anchor. How different the case with Professor Maury, who wrote among other great books one on *The Physical Geography of the Sea*. He was a devout and humble Christian. In his youth he was a midshipman on a man-of-war, and long years after, in his dying hour, the scenes of early days came back. He fancied himself in the midst of a storm, when the ship, holding by her anchors, seemed threatened with destruction, even under the shadow of the shore. Turning his languid eye upon his son at the bedside, he asked, in the language of the ruling passion of his soul, "Do I

seem to drag my anchors? They do not drag, they are sure and steadfast." After he had been silent for some time, and was supposed to be speechless, he waved his hand in farewell, and said, "All is well!" and thus he left the shores of time for the fairer scenes of the eternal world.

To any without hope of eternal life I can offer that hope with full assurance that if you will fulfill the conditions it shall be yours. In Hebrews there is a comparison of the soul that seeks salvation to a man who had fled for refuge, "to lay hold upon the hope" set before him. Will you lay hold upon that hope? The one condition is to drop your sins and take hold with both hands—with all your heart, with all your strength—of the life-line of mercy.

A man fell into an old well. His cry for help attracted a neighbor, who let down a rope and attempted to draw him up; but the rope kept slipping through the man's hands. At last the man at the top of the well shouted down to him, "Have you something in your hands?" "Yes," replied the man at the bottom, "I have some parcels here which I very much desire to bring up with me." But he finally had to drop all his parcels and then there was enough muscular power in his arms to hold tight to the rope till he was safe in the upper

air. Are you seeking salvation, longing to be a Christian man or woman and know the gladness of the Christian hope, and yet finding yourself day after day in the horrible pit of evil, though the golden chain of salvation dangles ever within reach of your hands? Drop your sins. They will paralyze your fingers and rob your muscles of strength. You will die in the pit of your iniquity, without God and without hope in the world, unless you drop your sins and with all your power take hold of Jesus Christ. The moment you do that he will lift you out of the mire and the clay, place your feet upon the eternal rock, and put songs of praise on your lips.

VIII

THE PROMISE OF ANGELIC COMPANIONSHIP

He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.—*Psalm xci*, 11.

THERE are so many windows into the soul from the world of physical phenomena surrounding us that we are constantly in danger of becoming materialists and thinking of life as only a place for eating and drinking and making sure of our physical comfort. When we thus permit ourselves to be deceived we are great losers. It is the glory of our humanity that this world is only the vestibule of our existence. The human body is only one of our houses. It is the first one, and it is not strange that we feel kindly toward it, that we patch it up the best we can, and keep it as long as we can. But when we are tempted to act as though it were our only house, and that when it falls to pieces and goes down, beaten to rack and ruin by the storms of the years, we are homeless, we are cheated beyond all our power to conceive.

We are spiritual beings living in this material world, clothed for a time with this physical body,

so marvelously constructed that it is obedient to the control of the spiritual personality which occupies it. There are other spiritual beings in the world, at least who visit our world and have duties connected with it, who are not clothed upon with physical bodies which may be discerned by the natural eye or by the touch of a human hand. In the Bible they are called angels. They are pure and holy beings who have never sinned against God, who have always been dominated by the spirit of perfect love, and who give themselves with complete surrender to the divine purposes of God in the salvation of men. We are assured that God sends them on missions of mercy to men and women on the earth. If we examine the divine record we note many different classes of missions where angels have served the purposes of God.

Sometimes God sends them in warning. When Lot moved into Sodom, and settled down to do business in that wicked city, God did not forget him. Although he had not lived as he should have lived, God did not give him up without an effort. O, the infinite mercy of God to his children! Some of you know what that means. You have been cold and lukewarm in your service of the Lord, and faulty in the doing of your duty, and you have pitched your tent toward Sodom; and

yet God has followed after you with warning angels, to turn you back to righteousness.

At last Sodom waxed so very bad that God determined on its destruction. But he would not destroy it without giving Lot a chance of escape. And he sent two angels to him to warn him and give him an opportunity to save his family if he could. But, alas, they had been drawn away into such wicked associations that many of them would not leave. And the angels tugging at Lot's hand hastened the old man with two of his children out of the city as the judgment of God fell upon it.

In the case of Balaam you may see another very conspicuous instance where God used angels to warn of temptation to sin. Balaam's love for money was drawing him rapidly on the road to ruin. He was on his way to take a bribe from the enemies of God. But God gave him another chance. At a narrow place in the path on his journey the angel of God stood with a drawn sword, warning him of his danger. Balaam understood the warning, but did not heed it, and the end of the man was dark and desperate. Are God's angels warning you? Have they come to you in the quiet of the evening, and spoken to you of the danger of your course? Have they come to you with drawn sword and revealed to

you the impending ruin if you did not change your course? It may be even now that they are tugging at your hand, as they tugged at the hand of Lot, to pull you out of your Sodom. Heed God's angels and hearken to their warning!

We are assured that angels are greatly interested in the conversion of sinners. Christ says that there is joy among the angels of God over every sinner that repenteth, and Paul declares that one of the things the angels are very curious about, the mystery of which they are constantly desiring to look into, is the plan of salvation. Angels have always followed the plan of salvation from the very beginning with loving interest. It was an angel who announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem. It was a choir of angels who sang the first Christian anthem. Angels came to comfort Jesus in the wilderness after he had been forty days tempted of the devil. In the garden of Gethsemane, in the hour of Christ's agony, angels came and comforted him. On the first Easter morning it was an angel which descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from the sepulcher, and angel guards remained about the empty tomb to speak messages of loving comfort to the disciples. At the ascension of Jesus angels remained behind to

say to his astonished friends that he would come again in glory. So, throughout the whole earthly history of Jesus Christ and his loving sacrifice for men, angels watched with tender interest and helpfulness. Every time a sinner listens to the gospel, and turns his feet toward the cross of Christ, angels fill heaven with joy at the good news. Our Saviour has declared that the angels shall be witnesses to his confession of us before the throne of God. One of his sweetest promises is that if we confess him here before men he will confess us before his Father and the holy angels.

Angels watch the pathway of those who trust God and do his will, in their defense. The psalmist says that "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them." How splendid is that figure! The thought is that of an army which goes into camp to defend against any enemy that may come. So God's angels camp between his children and their foes.

One of the most beautiful illustrations showing how God sends his angels to encamp about those who trust him is in the story of Elisha. The king of Syria, finding that Elisha was the chief counselor of the king of Israel, conceived the brilliant plan of capturing the prophet. So he sent a large army and surrounded the town of Dothan,

where his scouts had informed him Elisha and his secretary were staying overnight. In the morning when his young man arose and went out to see what kind of a day it was to be, he was astonished and horrified to see a great army of Syrian soldiers entirely surrounding the town. To him it could mean only one thing: they were after his master, and would certainly take him prisoner. He hurried back, and at the door he met Elisha coming forth, and he cried out to him, "Alas, my master! How shall we do?" But Elisha placidly responded, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And the Lord answered that prayer, and the young man's eyes never did open so wide as when he saw that the mountain about the town was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha. God's angelic armies were encamped about his prophet, and they threw the hosts of Syria into confusion, and Elisha went forth unharmed. Let us not fail of the comfort of this beautiful picture. Are you doing God's work with unselfish devotion? Then you may trust him to send more soldiers to guard over you than can possibly be brought against you. Be sure you are doing right, then you may have

absolute rest, because angels will see to your defense.

God sends his angels to minister to his children in their sorrow and trouble. The writer of the book of Hebrews, speaking of angels, says, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And it is not only some aristocrats of righteousness, like Abraham and Isaac and Jacob among the patriarchs, or like Paul or Peter or John among the apostles; but the humblest and poorest and meanest of those who have loved the name of God, though they have blundered and sinned until they scarcely dare lift their faces out of the sand in their humiliation, are ministered to by God's angels, who come to comfort them in the deep sorrows and troubles of life. This thought is beautifully illustrated in the story of Hagar. Poor Hagar, her life had not been happy; more sinned against than sinning, she had been forced into exile and loneliness, and now, in the desert, she is lost, and her son is dying. She cannot see him die, and she goes a little way off, her heart breaking, and she cries aloud unto God. And then a wonderful thing happened—that is, wonderful to people who are wrapped up in this material world, but something as natural as when the flower bulb

answers to the sun in springtime. An angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw the well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink." N. P. Willis, the poet, says:

"She stood beside the well her God had given
To gush in that deep wilderness, and bathed
The forehead of her child until he laughed
In his reviving happiness, and lisped
His infant thought of gladness at the sight
Of the cool plashing of his mother's hand."

Let every sorrowing heart take comfort at this picture. God who sent his angel to minister to Hagar in her sorrow has abundant angels to point out wells of comfort for you in the darkest hour that can ever come.

Angels conduct Christians home to heaven at death. Jesus made this very clear in his story of Dives and Lazarus. The Master says that Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. If we take into our heart all these illustrations of angelic ministry and love, it must protect our ideas of life from loneliness. God sends his angels

to warn us when we are tempted to sin. His angels watch over us with rejoicing when we give our hearts to him. Angels defend us when the armies of Satan come against us with wicked intent. Angels minister to us in every emergency of sorrow and trial, and when at last the time shall come for us to lay aside this earthly tabernacle and go to dwell in the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," the house which Jesus our Saviour has been preparing for us, the angels who have been ministering to us all the way will bear us home. The old camp-meeting hymn which I have heard sung by thousands of voices in the great groves of the West,

"Oh, come, angel band!
Come and around me stand;
Oh, bear me away on your snowy wings
To my immortal home,"

is warranted by the promises of God's Word. Let us give ourselves with complete devotion to the service of God, to the ministry of angels, to the fellowship of all goodness, that an abundant entrance may be given to us into our immortal life.

IX

THE PROMISE OF SLEEP

He giveth his beloved sleep.—*Psalm cxxvii*, 2.

Thy sleep shall be sweet.—*Proverbs iii*, 24.

A REMARKABLY interesting and instructive book, entitled *The Mystery of Sleep*, has recently been written by Dr. John Bigelow, of New York city. This writer, who has given great study and exhaustive research to the subject, raises many interesting and pertinent questions in regard to the purposes and benefits of sleep. He raises the serious question as to why average persons should be required by the inexorable laws of their existence to spend eight out of every twenty-four hours, or one third of their entire lives, in sleep. He seeks to discover why so large a part of every day is apparently wasted, and why this apparent waste is made one of the conditions of life not only to men and women, but in the animal and vegetable kingdoms as well.

Dr. Bigelow is not satisfied with the ordinary answer that we sleep in order that we may rest and repair the waste tissues. He does not believe

that that is a satisfactory answer to the question as to why we are compelled to sleep one hour out of three, eight hours out of every twenty-four, four months out of every year, and twenty-three years out of every threescore years and ten. He seriously assails this position by asserting that we do not rest when we sleep in any sense in which we do not rest when awake. He pertinently asks: "What faculty of the spiritual or the physical nature of man is in repose during sleep? What single function or energy of the body is then absolutely suspended? Certainly not our hearts, which do not enjoy a moment's rest from the hour of our birth to our decease. The heart is always engaged in the effort to send our blood, latent with vital energy, through every vein, artery, and tissue of our bodies." And so he goes on, taking up various organs of the human frame, and shows that nothing rests while we sleep.

I have not time to follow this line of thought, although it is very interesting, but wish to discuss another proposition made by Dr. Bigelow, which is that the great purpose of sleep is to disassociate us periodically from the world in which we live, and in a sense to regenerate us morally and spiritually. To his mind we have in sleep conditions which are in harmony with one of the supreme

behests of a Christian life—utter deliverance from the domination of the phenomenal world; an entire emancipation, for these few sleeping hours, from the cares and ambitions of the life into which we were born and to the indulgence of which we are inclined by nature to surrender the service of all our vital energies. If it be a good thing to live above the world, to regard our earthly life as transitory, as designed to educate us for a more elevated existence, to serve us as a means, not an end, then we have in sleep, apparently, an ally and coadjutor—at least, to the extent of delivering us for several hours every day from a servile dependence upon what ought to be a good slave but is always a bad master.

Other thinkers have believed in this purpose of sleep. Horace Bushnell once said that a man must be next to a devil who wakes angry, and that after sleep, which is an unconscious Sabbath, we begin another day, and every day is Monday. It was his view that this kind economy of sleep constantly inclined us to good dispositions, that the acrid and sour ingredients of evil, the grudges, the wounds of feeling, the morose fault-findings, the black torments of misanthropy, are so far tempered and sweetened by God's gentle discipline of sleep that we probably do not even conceive how

demoniacally bitter the world would become if no such kind interruption broke their spell.

There are many historical illustrations to support this view both in the lack of sleep and in the benefits of it. Lord Byron told George Ticknor that he wrote the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers in the country, the winter before he set forth on his travels, while a heavy fall of snow was on the ground, and that he kept house for a month, during which time he never saw the light of day, rising in the evening after dark and going to bed in the morning before dawn. This certainly offers an explanation of the tone, spirit, and purpose of that most brutal and cruel satire. For a whole month Byron lived largely on strong drink, took no wholesome sleep, and wrote with the spirit of the bottomless pit guiding his pen.

That Napoleon Bonaparte slept only about half as much as the average man of affairs is a fact often commented upon. Perhaps the lack of the restraining and spiritualizing influences of sleep may account, largely, for the monster incarnation of selfishness which he became.

After showing that John Calvin, while pursuing his theological studies, used frequently to work all night without sleep and then work on through the day, Mr. Bigelow raises the question

whether some of those relentless doctrines, from under the spell of which a great part of the religious world is just now coming out, might not have had another putting if Calvin had had wholesome sleep as a regenerating spiritual influence during those years.

In the Bible we have a remarkable instance of God's power to change the thought and purpose of a man in his sleep. Jacob, on his journey toward Padan-aram, sore-hearted and lonely, lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. He took a stone for his pillow and lay down to sleep. As he slept he had a glorious vision, the most comforting part of which was that he felt the presence of God, full of mercy toward himself. When he awoke he exclaimed: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He arose, took the stone that he had put under his head, and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon it, and called the name of that place Beth-el. If Jacob had spent that night walking the floor and worrying over his troubles, no such blessing could have come and no such morning could have dawned for him.

In our texts we have the promise of sleep as a

blessing bestowed upon those who seek to do God's will and who are his beloved. It is promised as one of the greatest blessings that God can give. Largely wrapped up with our happiness and peace is this question of sleep.

The great destroyer of sleep is sin. Daniel, in telling the story of Nebuchadnezzar and of Darius, uses in one case the significant words, "And his sleep brake from him," and in the other, "His sleep went from him." Many men and women in the world get no sweet sleep because of their sins. Shakespeare makes Macbeth enlarge upon the blessedness of "innocent sleep" after his murder of Duncan and after he had forfeited forever the capacity for such sleep himself:

"Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does murder sleep'—the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast."

And again he makes Iago taunt Othello by saying:

"Not poppy, nor mandragora,
Nor all the drowsy sirups of the world,
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
Which thou ow'dst yesterday."

It is the glory of our blessed religion that Christ has power to treat a poor soul whose sins drive sleep from his eyes and make him as unhappy as the demon-possessed man in the land of the Gadarenes, and bring back again to him the sweet sleep of the innocent child. Only the Great Physician can exercise a power like that.

An overweening anxiety for worldly success often banishes sleep, and with it the humanizing and blessed influence which comes with sleep. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes utters a great truth when, speaking of the growth of worldliness on the man who pursues it, he says: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?" And then this shrewd observer, who spoke out of wide experience and observation, says, "The abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep." There are a great many people who would be glad to forego a large part of their fortunes if they could sleep again as they could before ambition and anxiety had begun to possess them. To turn again to Shakespeare, where will we find a more striking illustration of our theme than in that thrilling

soliloquy of Henry IV, when the king is made to say, as he longs for sleep in vain:

“How many thousand of my poorest subjects
 Are at this hour asleep!—O Sleep, O gentle Sleep,
 Nature’s soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
 Nor steep my senses in forgetfulness?
 Why rather, Sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
 And hushed with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber,
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,
 Under the canopies of costly state,
 And lulled with sounds of sweetest melody?
 O thou dull god, why liest thou with the vile
 In loathsome beds, and leav’st the kingly couch
 A watch case or a common ’larum bell?
 Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
 Seal up the ship-boy’s eyes, and rock his brains
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
 And in the visitation of the winds,
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
 Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
 With deafening clamor in the slippery shrouds,
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?—
 Canst thou, O partial Sleep, give thy repose
 To the wet sea-boy, in an hour so rude;
 And in the calmest and most stillest night,
 With all appliances and means to boot,
 Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.”

The teachings of these scriptures and this philosophy is that we should hold our business and

all our worldly affairs to be our servants, and not permit them to become our masters. Poor slave is he who is servant to his goods.

The best friend of sleep is a good conscience. David said, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety." The man who can say his prayers out of a confiding heart, leaving all his business and all he loves and all his destiny in God's hand, feeling that it is in the hand of his heavenly Father, can sleep with a sleep so sweet that no guilty soul can even conceive of it.

Another help to good sleep is wholesome work—work that fills the mind and the heart as well as the hands. The writer of Ecclesiastes, whom we quoted a while ago, also says, "The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much." That is, his life may be very humble; the physical life not nourished as well as it might be. Yet in his life of simple and quiet labor he finds his sleep to be sweet. This is peculiarly true where the labor is such that it gives inspiration to the mind and joy to the heart. In the Song of Songs the author says, "I sleep, but my heart waketh." It is like that sleep which comes to us when we lie down with perfect content and with hopeful anticipations for the morning. We

ought to live all our lives like that. It requires confidence in God and the acceptance of our daily work as a part of his plan for us. Jeremiah, God's faithful prophet, after one of his prophetic visions says, "Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me." If we fret and chafe about our work it will largely spoil our sleep; but if we take our daily toil as God-given, and seek to perform the labor not as unto men only, but as unto God, there will come a charm about it that will minister to the contentment of our minds and help to sweeten our sleep.

We must not close this study without noting that in the Bible the death of good people is often compared to sleep. Paul, in one of his addresses recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, says, "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep." And again, in speaking of the resurrection of Christ, he says that Jesus appeared "to five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now, but some are fallen asleep." And again he says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept." Luke, describing the death of Stephen, says that he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell

asleep." When Jesus went to raise Lazarus from the dead he said to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may wake him out of sleep." And there are many other such references in the New Testament.

Surely all these scriptures must suggest to us that death is no more unnatural than going to sleep, and if we live in perfect love and harmony with our heavenly Father, doing his will, we shall have no more fear of the one than of the other. It is said of Sir Thomas Browne, who wrote in the seventeenth century a volume entitled *Religio Medici*, that he saw so little difference between sleep and death that he dared not lie down in his bed at night without having a colloquy with God. This same reverent and devout man wrote an evening hymn in which he says:

"Sleep is a death; O make me try,
By sleeping, what it is to die;
And as gently lay my head
On my grave, as now my bed.
Howe'er I rest, great God, let me
Awake again at least with thee.
And thus assured, behold I lie
Securely, or to wake or die.
These are my drowsy days; in vain
I do now wake to sleep again:
O come that hour, when I shall never
Sleep again, but wake forever."

X

THE PROMISED HIDING PLACE

In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion.—*Psalm xxvii*, 5.

THIS is a world in which any physician who has a cure for trouble can get a hearing, for into the brightest life there come many dark days. Our lives are like a kaleidoscope with ever-changing pictures, where light and shadow forever chase each other on the horizon, and where at any time may come the blackness of real trouble. No man is powerful enough, or rich enough, or sufficiently wise to guarantee to himself certain prosperity or happiness. Dark clouds may come on the afternoon of the brightest morning. Long ago a very wise man wrote, "If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many."

But David declares to us he has found a hiding place and a refuge in trouble. With boldness he proclaims that "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a

rock." This registers the psalmist's faith in God and his confidence in the inner spiritual nature as being of greater account than the outward conditions. For you will notice that all this provision which God was to make for the peace and happiness of David was spiritual. David was to be made safe and secure from trouble not because the storm would not beat upon him as upon his neighbor, but because in the day of trouble he should be sheltered under the pavilion of God, he should have a peace and a joy of soul only to be found in the secret of the tabernacle of God, he should rest in a stability known only to those whose feet are upon the Rock of Ages. Now, though the world is a good many centuries older than it was in David's day, it is in all its great characteristics the same world still, and our human nature is the same. Trouble is still the common lot, and we have as great need as did the psalmist to find a hiding place in the pavilion of God on the day of storm. Let us study for a little time how God hides us in the day of trouble.

In the first place, sincere and genuine worship of God and obedience to God prepare our minds and hearts to face the troubles of life. They put strength into our moral muscle; stimulate our spiritual nerve, and give us a courage not possible

otherwise. As ease and physical dissipation and debauch will render the body weak and nerveless, so that it falls an easy prey to disease or is unfit to meet any attack upon it from an enemy, so sin of every kind deteriorates the moral nature and weakens the mind and heart so that we are unfit to sustain ourselves against any trouble or sorrow that may come. We all know that in time of trouble the spirit with which we face it amounts to more than anything else. Trouble meets two men situated exactly alike so far as outward circumstances are concerned. One lies down weak and helpless, falls into despair, and dies. The other summons his courage, faces the storm with composure, and achieves the greatest victory of his life. The difference is not without, it is all within.

Some time ago ten men and one woman landed in New York after a terrible experience at sea. They had been on a crippled sailing vessel for twenty-seven days. Their vessel was completely disabled and beyond control. Signals of distress were hoisted and lights were burned at night, but they were not seen. At last they were compelled to abandon the ship. The only provisions they had left were bread and water. They crowded into the one boat the storm had spared and set

out from the wreck, hoping to reach land. They suffered ten days and nights before they reached one of the Windward Isles. A passing steamer brought them to New York. On arrival here the crew reported that during that terrible time of suspense and hardship the strongest sank in despair; they would have completely lost heart and given up the struggle had it not been for the cheerfulness and courage of the only woman on board, the wife of the captain, a young girl only twenty-three years old, whose untiring devotion and unwavering hope gave courage to all. The strongest man could have been better spared from the boat than she, whose indomitable spirit cheered and encouraged the others. So it is that the religion of Jesus Christ, the sincere worship of God, shelters the Christian in the day of trouble by sustaining in his breast a brave spirit. To such a man all other troubles seem small compared to disloyalty to God. And so long as there is peace with God everything else is too insignificant to worry about. The secret of the greatest heroism is in this sheltering of the soul under the pavilion of God.

Dr. Thomas Guthrie tells us that there was a man in Scotland once so in love with prayer that he was accustomed to retire to his old church in

the town of Ayr and spend whole nights upon his knees, till, it was said, they grew hard as the stones on which he knelt. But that which made the knees callous softened and sanctified the heart, inspiring it at the same time with heroic courage. He was fit mate of her, John Knox's daughter, who, on King James offering to set her husband free if he would own the king's supremacy within Christ's church, replied, as she held out her apron, "I would rather keep his head there." She would rather carry his poor, bleeding head in her apron to the grave than have him faithless to God. When our faith in God and our devotion is like that we are hidden in the pavilion of God from the troubles of life.

Second, God uses the memory of good deeds and past efforts to serve him to comfort and shelter the good man in affliction. Reflection and memory are either a great comfort or a great curse to every one of us as we go on in life. To the sinner the remembrance of the past in time of trouble only adds bitterness to his cup of sorrow. Oftentimes it is the bitterest ingredient in the cruel draught. A man has gone on careless and indifferent, sinning against God with a light heart, without taking much notice of it during his day of prosperity, and then the day of trouble comes, the clouds of

sorrow and trial gather on every hand, and in that black hour all his past life comes up before him. Deeds that were once done lightly, now, for the first time, he recognizes to be of terribly serious importance. From every sin there is accusation and threatening, and he finds that in his careless days he has been planting thorns in his pillow, on which he must lie now in the day of trouble. All about him is trouble, and there is nothing in his past to comfort him. Vilhelm Krag, a Norwegian poet, has recently written a sad little poem which gives utterance to the thoughts of a man in such a situation :

"It withers, it withers,
"It withers, it withers,—
The world withers, and roses, and women,
My body and all the quivering nerves
 Wither!
And Time, it goes creeping slowly past me,
And the Hours walk by to dig my grave.
I dare not think—I dare not live.
 Dare not die!"

What a different song the Christian man has to sing in the day of trial and trouble who, looking back, is comforted with many a good day's work for God and humanity and is consoled with many a memory of God's mercies and with the assurance that he will not now be deserted. David

says that in the hour of trouble he will remember the songs God has given him in the night; other nights as dark as this, and still God made his heart to sing. Paul and Silas in the Philippian dungeon at midnight recalled such memories of past victories in the service of Christ as to fill their hearts and their voices with melody. The pavilion of God sheltered them, so that the jailer had no power to bind them.

It was in the same spirit that Robert Browning, facing the troubles of weakness and age, was constrained to sing:

"Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made;
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned;
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be
afraid!'"

Third, the consciousness of God's loving favor soothes the good man and the true woman in life's sorest troubles. While there is no reflection that can give a man so much bitterness in time of trouble as the consciousness that he is a sinner against God and that in the very logic of the case God is against him; so, on the other hand, in the hour of trouble nothing is such a precious comfort

to the Christian as the consciousness that God loves him and cares for him and that he may rely upon a friendship with heaven which is unalterable. This is a pavilion which goes with us like the traveler's tent. It is always up-to-date. Every year on the first of January all the dies bearing date from which were made United States coins during the previous year are destroyed. This is done to prevent their falling into the hands of counterfeiters. At the same time the new dies for the new year are brought into use. While the old dies are undergoing destruction the mints of the nation start upon making gold, silver, nickel, and copper coin, from the gold double eagle down to the copper cent, all bearing the impression of the new year's die. God's mercies are like that, for we are assured that "the Lord's mercies are new every morning," and the Christian has a movable pavilion following him, overshadowing him, protecting him, in the troubles of life.

With such a consciousness of God's presence in the midst of earth's troubles, as John McNeill says, all our troubles will become toothless tigers to us. God will take the teeth out of them.

The illustrations which God uses to reveal himself to us, the very names he asks us to call him, are a pavilion of shelter when our hearts believe

on him. The story is told of a little girl who followed the workmen from her father's grounds when they went home to their dinner, because she was very fond of a kind old man who was one of them. Looking out from his cottage door he saw her, and invited her to go into the cottage. She looked in, saw the strange faces around the table, and hesitated. When he urged her, she raised her sweet face and inquired:

"Is there any mother here?"

"Yes, my dear, there's a mother here," he answered.

"O, then I'll go in; for I am not afraid if there is a mother there!"

She had every confidence in a mother's sympathy. What infinite comfort there should be for us in the promise that "as one whom his mother comforteth," God is ready to comfort and bless us.

The promises of God are rich and abundant and beyond all question to the sincere soul who is in trouble, no matter how desperate the emergency. He explicitly invites us, saying, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." And again we have the assurance, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my

righteousness. . . . Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

Fourth, the good man has an unfailing source of comfort in the hope of heaven and eternal life. No matter how dark it may grow in this world, the heavenly world is always bright to his eyes. Trouble may abound here, but his eye is on a country where there is no sorrow or trouble. Like Abraham, he beholds "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He has visions of a beautiful clime where there is no sickness, nor pain, nor death, nor tears; a land of eternal joy. When a man is only a passenger on a ship or a train, and knows that the voyage or the journey will soon be over, it does not require a great deal of patience to put up with what would seem unbearable if there were no limits set to the endurance. A man laughs at the narrow quarters in the steamship where he scarcely has room to turn around, because his thought is on the harbor and the home that lie beyond. So the Christian

knows that he is only a traveler here, only a passenger through this world, and the troubles and annoyances of travel are a small thing compared with the blessedness of the home toward which he is sailing.

When General Lafayette paid his last visit to this country the people of New York city gave him a royal reception. A large number of vessels went out to meet him, and many bands of music played "Hail to the Chief" and the national music of France, but the old soldier was calm and unmoved. When he stepped on shore the whole world about seemed shaken with the thunder of the salute, and the soldiers did him honor as to a conqueror as they shouted his welcome, and through it all there was no sign of emotion on his strong face. In the midst of shouting and cheers and waving flags the great Frenchman was taken under triumphal arches to the famous old Castle Garden, and there were gathered the greatest men of the American Republic to give greeting to Lafayette, and still his face was calm. But we are told that when he had taken his seat in the great amphitheater the curtain was lifted and he saw before him an almost perfect representation of the place in France where he was born and brought up, and when he saw the old home, so filled with

tender memories, the home where his father and mother had lived and died, then Lafayette was touched, and, bowing his face in his hands, he wept like a child. So, if with true hearts we face the future with trust in God and hope in Jesus Christ, there can be no trouble so dark, there can be no emergency so desperate, but we shall behold the heaven which is our home. There are our loved ones who have gone before—father, mother, child, friends dearer than our own hearts are there; our hearts behold them now. What can any troubles amount to so long as we are on the way to them and shall soon be with them?

XI

THE PROMISED ESCAPE

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.—*1 Corinthians* x, 12, 13.

PRIDE and self-satisfaction are always out of place in human life. We are constantly liable to temptation to evil. Paul, after he had been many years in the way, and had accomplished much as the soldier of Jesus Christ, felt that he needed to be ceaselessly on his guard lest, having preached to others, he should himself become a castaway.

Travelers in the Alps tell us that a very slight atmospheric change will sometimes transform an ascent of one of the great historic mountains from a perfectly safe and pleasurable experience into a most perilous attempt. So in our everyday lives what appears to be an entirely safe experience for us suddenly becomes fraught with temptation and danger, and we walk as a climber creeps on the edge of a precipice.

Our human lives are often compared to a voyage, and it is imperative, if we would make a successful voyage, that we should take frequent reckonings of the heavenly bodies. A ship at sea cannot measure her course by another ship, or by some floating derelict, or by the restless waves; if it be beyond sight of solid headlands or lighthouse, its course must be reckoned by the sun or by the stars. We must make our reckoning by the laws of God. We must measure our course and judge of our position by our relation to the divine laws.

We need to beware of the beginnings of temptation. Many of the most terrible temptations that have ever cursed humanity are at the beginning but a silky cobweb, seductive and fascinating, and giving no indications of the terrible danger that lies behind them. George Eliot gives in *Romola* the picture of a man, good, generous, handsome, with all the appliances and means of doing good, who, because he tried to slip away from everything that was unpleasant, and cared for nothing so much as his own safety, came, at last, to commit some of the basest deeds, such as make men infamous. Many there are who are led into the fearful thralldom of the appetite for strong drink, to whom the beginning of temptation is so charm-

ing and so utterly void of appearance of evil that the victim is completely deceived. When they first look on the wine it is so red, it gives such a beautiful color in the cup, it adds such a flush of enthusiasm and gayety to the social hour, that it does not seem possible that the serpent that bites and the adder that stings lie coiled and lurking in its rich depths. And yet, in the background, drunkenness and all the loathsome and beastly retinue that follow in the train of it are waiting. The only safety is to beware of the beginnings of temptation.

Many people with good intentions are in danger from false security. David tells us that in his days of prosperity he said, "I shall never be moved," and yet it was in that hour when he thought himself so immovable that he fell into sin that came near being his eternal destruction. Nothing could be more perilous to the Christian than to become so self-congratulatory about his own religious experience that he forgets that he owes it all to the goodness and mercy of God and that he is dependent every moment of his life upon the Holy Spirit for all of his religious happiness and spiritual strength. The moment a man forgets that, he loses his humility and becomes self-sufficient and proud and is in immediate peril

of overthrow. Many of the saddest defections from the Christian character have come in the case of men and women who have made profession, and no doubt sincerely and honestly so, of entire sanctification and perfect holiness. They came to trust in themselves, to think somehow they were a separate order of God's children, and did not need to be every moment alert and watchful lest they enter temptation. And so they came broken to the earth from the highest possible profession. Let us be warned—not from professing Christ and giving God the glory for every blessing he bestows on us; but let us be warned against carelessness and presumption, that we walk softly before the Lord and trust every hour in his infinite love to keep us from sin.

Dr. Talmage used to tell a little story of an experience meeting held in Louisville, Kentucky, that points a lesson. It was a meeting in which were related a great many most enthusiastic experiences. A man rose up and said: "I am a ship steaming right ahead for glory. I can tell ye I am going along at a spanking pace, and soon expect to enter the blessed haven of eternal felicity." Another man, as though he intended to outdo the last speaker, followed him by saying: "Yes, friends, like our brother who has just sat down,

I also am a ship in full sail, steaming straight and fast for the heavenly shore. I am going along at the rate of forty knots an hour, and soon shall hail the mountain tops of Immanuel's land." An aged sister who was present, and whose experience of Christian life extended over many years, arose and said: "Well, you are all getting along mighty fast. I've been a-going to heaven for seventy years, and I have had to walk all the way, and have often stumbled and fallen, but have got up again, and if I ever get there at all I expect I'll have jest to walk the rest of the way. As to you men who are going so fast, all I've got to say is that if you get to going much faster you'll bust your bilers, and never get there at all." Alas! we have all of us seen too many wrecks along the way where exploded boilers have done their havoc in the church and out of it. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

But human life is like the pendulum of a clock, and we are always swinging from one extreme to the other. So our text suggests to us an insidious delusion of the evil one which is likely to come to us when we are tempted and beset. Satan tries to make us feel that our temptations are singular and peculiar, that really we are not treated right by the Lord in that he has permitted

us to be so beset. But Paul assures us that this is a falsehood of the enemy of our souls. Our temptation is not peculiar; it is common to man, and shall not be greater than we can bear.

There is infinite comfort in the assurance of our text that God will never suffer any of us who trust him to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, and that in every temptation he will make a way for our escape. There would not be the same comfort in it if it were left to us to make the way of escape; that would not be fair, because some surpass others in intelligence and would have more wit in devising means to escape. But if God makes the way, then there is no excuse, for it will be as sufficient for one as for another. The way is prepared; it is for us to avail ourselves of it.

It is interesting to note some of the ways God makes for our escape in time of temptation.

First, God makes a way of escape by commanding us to flee from the presence of the temptation. Paul commands, in one of his letters, "Flee youthful lusts," and Joseph illustrated that same way of escape by running from the presence of the tempter. The writer of Proverbs applies the same doctrine in the case of the temptations to strong drink. His word is, "Look not thou upon the wine

when it is red." Keep out of sight of it. It is in harmony with the Lord's Prayer where it teaches us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." What folly it is to pray that prayer and then go at once where we shall be knowingly tempted. If God has prepared the way of flight, and we feel that there are certain associations and circumstances that always tempt us to do evil, then there is no safety but to keep away from those circumstances and those associations. And if we continue to go into danger after we know the danger and how to escape from it, our blood will be on our own heads. I have no doubt that this word goes straight to some consciences here. You have been tempted, fearfully tempted, and in the depths of your soul you have heard the command to fly. Dear friends, it is flee or die. Flee from the association that means death, though in doing so you pluck out a right eye and cut off a right hand. It is better to enter into heaven maimed than to lose your soul and fail of the great purpose of living.

Second, God opens the way of escape from temptation by strengthening us through fellowship and communion with Christ. A lady went on one occasion through a terrible winter storm to see a flower show. And when she reached the

place she passed in one moment out of the fierce storm, with its deep snow and cutting wind, into a marvelous hall, filled with hyacinths, tulips, jonquils, azalias, roses, and orchids. So it is the privilege of Christian men and women, on the busiest and most trying day that can possibly come, to pass in a moment from the temptations and struggles of life into the sweet fellowship of Christ, and through communion with him find grace to help in every time of need. There is nothing like this precious fellowship with Jesus Christ to strengthen a soul against temptation.

Many of you remember the story of the Taj Mahal at Agra in India. The story tells of Shah Jehan and his beautiful bride. Seven times she went down to the mysterious land of motherhood and came back each time with a babe; the eighth time the babe came back alone. Shah Jehan had promised her, sitting in the glorious garden at Agra, that he would build for her the most beautiful palace the world had ever known. Now, when his loved wife was brought back to the garden, he said: "My Mumtaz Mahal, you shall have your palace; although it shall be your tomb." He now lies beside her. He put this inscription on her tomb: "To the memory of an undying love." Dr. R. S. McArthur tells how on a recent

visit to the Taj Mahal he stood beneath that marvelous dome and pronounced aloud the inscription: "To the memory of an undying love." And then he listened, as the word love! love! love! reverberated. It seemed as though the echo went to heaven, and came back to earth, softly rolling around the walls. Then softer and sweeter it went to heaven again, and then returned to earth, until his eyes were moist and his heart was tender. And so, my dear friends, if we would rise triumphant over temptation we must be ourselves living temples glorified by the love and communion we have with Jesus Christ, our Saviour, so that our lives echo and reëcho with reverence and thanksgiving and love for God.

There is no one of you whose life is so busy or is filled with such grimy toil but that you may escape in the hour of your temptation by this divine communion. Downtown, in a great city, there was a big four-horse truck which had on the dashboard in bright letters the words "My Darling." One day there was a street blockade, and an observer noted that though the driver of this strangely named truck looked as unsentimental as possible, he was not profane, or brutal to his horses, nor did he show any anger toward his fellow teamsters. Patiently he waited the

loosening of the jam, while his neighbors filled the air with curses. Finding his horses restive, he climbed from his box and soothed them with gentle words and caresses. The man who was looking on asked him why he called his truck "My Darling." This was his reply:

"Well, because it keeps the memory of my daughter, little Nellie, before me. She's dead now, but before she died she put her arms about my neck, and said: 'Papa, I am going to die, and I want you to promise me one thing: please promise me you will never swear any more, nor whip your horses hard, and that you will be kind to mamma.' That's all there is about it, mister; I promised my little girl, and I've kept my word."

When the blockade was lifted this truckman resumed his seat and was soon lost in the tide of travel. If the memory of the promise to his little girl could save the big truckman from the temptation to swear and give way to brutal passion, how much more the living fellowship with Jesus Christ our Saviour!

Many years ago a good woman in a little village was accustomed to go out at the close of the day into a quiet corner of her garden and spend a time in prayer and loving communion with Christ. Some rude boys found it out and annoyed her at

her devotions. It was that which caused her to write a little hymn which has found its way into all the hymn books. It begins:

"I love to steal awhile away
From every cumbering care,
And spend the hours of setting day
In humble, grateful prayer."

That mother's son became one of the greatest missionaries to Japan, and her hymn and work will live forever. She knew where to find comfort in the hour of temptation. The same way of escape is open to us.

Third, there is still another way by which God gives us escape from temptation, and that is by inspiring us to give ourselves with such devotion to work for our fellow men that we are relieved from the pressure of temptation. Paul had this in his mind when, in his letter to the Galatians, he wrote, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The teaching of that is very evident. If you will keep yourself from being tempted to meanness, fill yourself with positive and earnest goodness. If you would save yourself from becoming miserly, open your purse and your hands to loving generosity in the service of others. If you would save yourself from being tempted to any sin, give

yourself in the strength of God and in the fellowship of Jesus Christ to the life of the Spirit, in doing the kind of work which Jesus Christ did when he was here on earth and which we are sure he would be doing if he were here now. Are you tempted to worldliness? Then give yourself to spiritual service in behalf of your neighbors, and as you thus use the gifts and the privileges God has given you, you will soon find that the old temptations to selfishness which once troubled you no longer harass your path.

XII

GOD'S PROMISED DELIGHT IN HIS CHILDREN

The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.—*Zephaniah* iii, 17.

It is a common thing for us to talk about God giving us happiness and comfort, but I am sure it would be a wholesome thing if we thought more of the gladness which we may give to God. As has been often said, Happiness is never caught by the man who chases her. If she comes at all, she comes as a reward of merit to one whose heart and soul is given up to goodness and duty. Some one has sung:

“While I sought Happiness she fled
Before me constantly.
Weary, I turned to Duty's path,
And Happiness sought me,
Saying, ‘I walk the road to-day:
I'll bear thee company.’”

So it is that our own happiness and prosperity in life are wrapped up with the happiness of God. If our lives are such that they give gladness to

God, it cannot but be true that the music of that joy shall sound also in our own hearts and lives. Let us study, then, some of the ways in which we may beyond question give gladness to our heavenly Father.

The first of these I want to mention is *uprightness* of conduct. David in his wonderful tribute to God in the twenty-ninth chapter of First Chronicles says, "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness." And Solomon, his son, many years later, said, "They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the Lord: but such as are upright in their way are his delight." We may be sure that we do not please God unless we are upright. If our ways are crooked and dishonest and unreliable, God cannot be happy about us; but if we are upright, standing in righteousness, God takes pleasure in us.

Perhaps the most remarkable opal in the world was recently imported into this country. The opal is remarkable not only for its size and its unusual beauty, rich in color and fire, but because it is evidently an opalized fossil. It takes only a glance at the opal to see that it is an opalized vertebra, or, in other words, a piece of backbone, which has through God's processes of

nature become a most splendid jewel. Scientific men do not understand how it came about; but in any event it is true to the scriptural suggestion that upright men and women who have sanctified backbones which hold them faithful for true living are the most precious jewels of God, in which he takes constant delight.

We need to be forever laying the emphasis upon this question of uprightness, for I doubt if there be any point where we are tempted so terribly. Saint James says: "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." That is saying in one way that a wavering man, a man with a jelly backbone, that can never be relied on to stand up straight for righteousness, is an impossible character; even Almighty God cannot do anything for him. And there is nothing that ought to hold our attention so much as to seek by the grace of God to build up will-power for righteousness in ourselves. There is no point where we ought to brace our children so much as at the point of self-reliant energy, developing in them that sort of steadfast spinal column that may be depended upon to stand upright against the wind and do the right thing. And the best way that any parent can do this is to

live that kind of a life before his children and the world. After Henry Ward Beecher became a famous man, and was looking back over his career, seeking for the one who had given him the strongest inspiration for life, he found that the personality that had helped him most was his father. It was no special care that his father gave him. He was, his son declared, with a touch of sadness, "too busy to be loved"; it was the life he lived before his children, day by day, that taught them a lesson they never forgot. "I never once," said Mr. Beecher, speaking of their bitter New England winters, "saw him flinch before the cold, or look as if anything was hard, or as if there was a reason for not pitching in and holding on when things were difficult. . . . Never was the snow so deep, or wind so high, or rain so driving, or night so black that the thought seemed to enter his head he must give up a meeting. He would take out his old silk handkerchief and put it on, and go forth into the storm without seeming to dread it, and as often as I have remembered it I have wished that I could put on his spirit the same way. He did it as a matter of course. And such was the effect of his example upon his children that there was not one of them that would not be ashamed to show the white feather in the presence

of external difficulties. Hymns, texts, catechisms, never influenced me, but a great many things which my father did, but which neither he nor any one else ever spoke of, have had an influence upon my whole life. . . . I had an ideal of what a man should be and should do." To live a life like that, that stands in the place of God to the boys and girls about us, as well as to men and women, is to live a life which God will rejoice over.

Another thing in our lives which gives joy to God is *reverence*. The psalmist says, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him." Of course, that does not mean any slavish fear. It is the same kind of fear that is mentioned in another place which says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It is that kind of fear which is born of love and admiration. It is the kind of fear that a little child who is full of tenderest love has for father or for mother. A cross look, a harsh tone of voice from either one of them, will bring more trouble into the little heart than the frowns and reproofs of all the world besides. It is because there is in that little heart that noblest kind of fear which is born of love, and which we call reverence. The parents delight in the child who is animated by that

spirit. Nothing ever makes the true father or mother so glad down in the depths of the soul, so that their hearts rest in the deep consciousness of love, as when that spirit is revealed by their children. So God, who is the infinite Father, whose pity is like a father's, whose comforting touch is like a mother's, rejoices and sings over us with gladness when our thoughts and our lives are full of reverent love.

We give gladness to God when we are inspired with *hope* in him. It is the psalmist again who says, "The Lord taketh pleasure . . . in those that hope in his mercy." Can you imagine anything more uncomfortable to a really noble-hearted and generous parent than to have a child continually going around down-hearted and depressed and hopeless for fear his father and mother may not be good to him? True, they always have been good to him; he has always had plenty to eat and wear; all his necessities have been met, and there have been a great many unexpected good times and rich gifts; but, notwithstanding all the past, he goes around continually whining and repining, saying, gloomily, "I am afraid father and mother are going to forget me, and I'll soon be out at the knees and shall not have enough to eat." Would it not be humiliat-

ing to the parent? How would it be possible for the father and mother to sing with joy and congratulate one another when they talk of that child? My dear friends, is it not true that some who hear this have been living just such a life as that complaining child? In a way you have been trying to be Christians, and you have a sort of faint hope that you will get to heaven after a while, but you are going through life looking at the black side of things, always fearful, often complaining, with no cheer in your heart and no cheer in your face. Is it possible that you are giving God any joy? How can God set the angels to singing when he thinks of you? Come, my friend, cheer up! God, who has always been good to his children, who is infinitely more merciful than any father you ever knew, will not stain his whole record by treating you meanly. Let your hope take wing and let your cheerful heart cause God to rejoice.

Meekness is also given as one of the causes of God's joy in his children. The psalmist says, "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation." That word "meek" has not been very popular in our time, or perhaps in any time. It seems to run straight against the grain of sinful human nature. David

Hume, the infidel historian, said, "Nothing carries a man through the world like a true, genuine, natural impudence." Over against that Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." And as rapidly as the Christian ideal of life gains on the mind and heart of the world the meek man who wins through gentleness instead of brute force, who stands aggressively for righteousness but in a spirit of sympathy and kindness toward all men—indeed, the Christman, with a moral backbone that is invincible, with aggressive force that is explosive, and yet with a compassion and sympathy and a gentleness which is the wonder of the ages—becomes the man of power. This is the life that is pleasing to God. God help us to live it!

God rejoices over the *prayerful* life. The writer of the book of Proverbs says, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the upright is his delight." There are many things we can never understand except by keeping in mind the words God uses about himself in his relation to us. To the true parent nothing is more satisfying to the heart than that a loving and obedient child should ask for the things needed when the parent is able to bestow them. And to a loving father who had abundance to give

his children it would cause real distress if he knew that his child was trying to do without, and doing so with discomfort and self-denial, rather than ask the father for what he needed. It would be not less discomfoting to have his child fail to appreciate the things of life which the father regards as of the greatest importance, so that the boy never asks for anything because he does not feel the need of anything of value.

I noted the story recently of a young fellow in the West who had always been poor, though he owned a piece of land. Some mineral discovery in the neighborhood made his land unexpectedly valuable. He sold ten acres of his farm for five thousand dollars, and received a check on the bank in payment. When he presented it at the bank the teller asked him if he did not wish to leave the money on deposit.

"No," he said, "I want the cash."

"If you are not going to use it you could leave it on deposit, and get it whenever you wished. The bank will pay you interest for the use of it."

"Give me the money."

"As it is a large amount, I suppose you will take it in fifty or one-hundred-dollar bills?"

"What would I do with hundred-dollar bills? I could never get them changed. I am going to

use the money. Give me them in fives; that's large enough."

Seeing that he was an ignorant man, and very stubborn, the teller knew it would be useless to reason any longer with him, and proceeded to count out five thousand dollars. The fives were made up in packages of five hundred dollars, hence he piled up ten packages on the counter in front of the young man.

"What's all this for?" he said, staring at the pile.

"It's for you—five thousand dollars."

"All that! Well, say, give me three dollars out of it, and keep the rest till I call for it."

I fear that some people's prayers are like that. There is no sense of that steady need which draws upon the Bank of Heaven every day, and every hour of the day, for the blessings which sustain the spirit and strengthen the heart for holy living. It is impossible that God can rejoice over us when we treat with such disrespect his glorious provisions for our spiritual life. If you want to make the heart of God glad you must draw on him every day for all the needs of your spiritual nature. If we are narrow, and jealous, and envious, and bigoted, it is our own fault; for there is grace enough in the Bank of Heaven, placed

there to our credit through the atonement of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to transform us into men and women that God can sing over with infinite joy.

Finally, God rejoices over the *repenting* soul. Jesus assures us that "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And in that wonderful parable of the prodigal it was not the prodigal that had all the happiness when he got back to his father's house. No, the father was glad also. He filled the house with merriment and feasting and music because, he said, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." It may be that I speak to some who cannot remember that for many years they have given any joy to God. You have grieved his Spirit; you have broken his commandments; you have gone far from him. Turn about to-day, and come back, and give him joy!

XIII

THE PROMISE OF AN UNCHANGEABLE SAVIOUR
(A WATCH-NIGHT SERMON)

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.—*Hebrews* xiii, 8.

BEFORE emphasizing the deeper significance of the text as a whole, I wish to ring the changes on the three tenses suggested by these three characterizations of time. They are the natural suggestions of the hour as we come in this watch-night service to the closing moments of the old year, looking forward to the beginning of the new year.

First, we have to do with yesterday. It is much in our mind to-night. To those of us who have reached middle age it seems a very brief time indeed since we were here on a similar occasion a year ago. Springtime, summer, autumn, and winter have passed since then, a full round twelve months, and yet so rapidly that it seems like a dream. That yesterday holds much for us of gladness and sorrow, of victory and defeat, of achievement and failure. It holds some things that we would not lose out of our memory for the

world, things precious for us to meditate upon, and it holds other things that we would gladly blot out if we could. But good or bad, happy or sorrowful, bright or dark, our yesterday has passed beyond our reach. It would be just as easy for us to reach back and pick up one of the yesterdays in the days of Napoleon, or further back into the days of Abraham, and change its deeds, as it would to change one smile, or one word, or one single act which has occurred in the yesterday of our last year. As Pilate said when they wanted him to change the title which he put over the cross of Jesus, "What I have written I have written," so the record of our yesterday is made up and we cannot change it if we would. What we have written we have written.

But while it is impossible for us to go back in our yesterday and change it, our yesterday pursues us with its insidious influence and presumes to dictate to us what we shall do to-day. We cannot escape from our yesterday. It manages to slip through the door which closes on the old year and come into the new year with us. You may open the door ever so quickly and slip through ever so silently, but your yesterday will come through with you. You might as well attempt to escape your shadow when the sun is shining high

and clear in the heavens as to attempt to escape from the shadow of your yesterday. It is one of the serious things of living that we gather by degrees a tremendous current from the past. This is one of the momentous facts—the great importance of character. A man came to me one day with the fountains of the great deep of his soul broken up. He had been a wicked man and for his sins he was suffering untold agony. The flood of his sinful life had wrought havoc with all that was dear to him. He abominated his sins; he loathed them; he looked on a good clean life as a traveler who has been lost in the desert looks on the oasis with its fruit-bearing palms, its green, sloping hillsides, and its springs of water. Just to have the privilege of being a good man seemed to him to be the fairest heaven ever dreamed of; and yet he sobbed and cried as he said, “It is impossible. My yesterday, my past, my past, is a millstone around my neck, that drags me down to hell. I try to escape, but there never was a deer more relentlessly, more cruelly, pursued by the hounds than I am pursued by my past.” That man had learned that his yesterday was not easy to shut out.

A good yesterday is as keen in the pursuit as a bad one. A good character is as full of good

treasures as a bad one is of evil mortgages. A good yesterday will not be left behind; it will follow us with all its habits of righteousness, with all its cultivated and developed current of benevolence and kindness and good-will; it will come with blessing out of our yesterday into our to-day.

Some of us look back upon occurrences in our yesterday that will forever stand up as monuments of the mercy of God. Captain Holm, one of the great sea captains of our time, had crossed the Atlantic Ocean many times without losing a spar; but at last his ship was struck by lightning in mid-ocean. The bolt came down the mizzen-mast, through the cabin, and passed into the hold, leaving a long black scar on the mast as it went. The ship was loaded with cotton, and the captain had every reason to fear the horrors of a ship on fire at sea. But the Lord in his mercy spared the vessel, and she came safely to port. When, a little later, workmen came on board to make some repairs, the captain went into the cabin one day just as the painter was raising his brush to paint out the lightning mark on the mast. "Stop! stop!" he said; "don't you put a brush full of paint on that mast. So long as I am master of this ship that scar on the mast shall stand, so that I may never forget how good the Lord was to save us when my

cotton-loaded ship was struck by lightning." Some of us look back during the last year on scars like that, which tell of the mercy of God to us in that he hath spared us, and to-night we give him thanks, and we face the future with braver hearts and larger hope and nobler courage because of them.

It is impossible that any one of us should begin the new year as though we had not lived before. That would be infinitely wasteful, and that is not God's plan. God is economical. He is not stingy, but he does not waste. There is always abundance; there are always floods of light and shower, and blessed influences to comfort body and soul; but nature teaches us wonderful economy, and God will not throw away your past. It stands godfather to your present. Good or bad, our to-day is what our yesterday made it. But, thank God, *to-day may be a miracle-working time.*

John Ruskin took for his great life motto the simple word "To-day." He had it engraved on his watch, and before him in his library, so that he could always see as he sat at his desk the text, "Work while it is yet called to-day." Think of the infinite possibilities of to-day. Was yesterday sinful as you look back upon it? Does it haunt you with the fact that it stands under the con-

demnation of God? Then to-day you may repent and through faith in Jesus Christ you may be forgiven. You cannot lay it up, that privilege of repentance, and say that some other time you will avail yourself of it; that is presumptuous folly, and you have no Scripture nor philosophy nor logic to bear you out in it. But to-day is your own, and now is the day of salvation, and you have the assurance that though your sins are as crimson or as scarlet, through repentance and confession and faith in Jesus Christ they may become as white as wool or snow. You cannot make yesterday white, but you may make to-day white by the grace of God. You may start a new current, a new stream of tendency in your life, so that if to-morrow ever becomes to-day, your yesterday will help you and not curse you.

To-day you may serve God; you may seek to know his will with such earnestness and simplicity that the Spirit of God will speak to you and give peace to your soul. To-day you may serve your fellow men. To-day you may hold back the hot word that leaps to your tongue; you may quell the anger that springs up in your heart; you may pray for your enemies; you may forgive those who have injured you; you may be patient and forbearing with those who try you;

yes, to-day you may make men see Christ live again in the loving spirit of your life. To-day you may visit the sick; you may give bread to the hungry; you may minister to the poor and the unfortunate; you may seek out those who are in trouble; you may forget yourself in bearing the burdens of the weak and in sympathizing with those who are in sorrow. To-day you may follow your Master, "who went about doing good." O, what a yesterday you may make out of to-day!

To-day you may win men to Christ. To-day you may seek out the little boy or the little girl who has been forgotten; take an interest in them, win their friendship, until their hearts look up to you as a flower does to the sun, and then bring them to Jesus. Anybody that will be patient and sympathetic and persistently kind can win the heart of a child, and then win it to Jesus; and, O, what a glory it is to win a child to Jesus! You may do that to-day. You may tell your neighbor about Jesus to-day; it may be too late to-morrow, but to-day it is possible. There is the man who works in your shop; there is a relative over whom you have influence; you may speak to them about Jesus to-day. God only knows if there will be any chance afterward, but to-day you may tell them about Jesus.

But as we wait here to-night we are watching for the morning. We hope and fear for a great many things about it, but we know nothing. As Joseph Parker says, we are blind with regard to the future; it is as if we had no wisdom at all; we may not boast of to-morrow, because we know not what one day may bring forth. We know the history of the day that is gone, but what is coming in the morning not the wisest man can tell. God keeps to-morrow in his own hand; but this we know: If we obey God we shall be led and upheld and comforted; our perplexity shall be relieved, the crooked places shall be made straight, the rough places made plain, and even the valleys shall be exalted; a new song will be in our mouth at the close of the day: if we have to sing of judgment, we shall also have to sing of mercy, for God's way toward us is one of judgment and love.

Some time ago an Australian paper reported that in New Zealand a bank on wheels had been instituted. A clerk traveled in the carriage, and was provided with a wallet containing a supply of money, and wherever the bank was customers were in the habit of depositing their money or doing business as occasion required. So it is with our bank of faith in God. If we trust God we enter the new year with the assurance that we may

draw from his mighty store under whatever circumstances we may be placed.

There is only one proper attitude for us to assume as we face to-morrow, and that is here and now, while it is to-day, to make sure that we are right with God, and face to-morrow, which is all uncertain, with the full determination that by God's help we will do our whole duty. That is more important than anything else about our future. It is more important than the question as to whether we shall live through the next year or not. When the Roman general, Pompey, was warned against the danger of his returning from Egypt to Italy, to meet a new trouble in his own land, his heroic answer was: "It is a small matter that I should move forward and die. It is too great a matter that I should take one step backward and live." We cannot afford to hold even life itself at the price of doing wrong. Life is only valuable when we are using it to serve the will of God. It is a terrible thing to deliberately go out of the old year and into the new knowing that we are not right with God.

A gentleman crossing the English Channel stood near to the helmsman. It was a calm and pleasant evening, and no one dreamed of a possible danger to their good ship. But a sudden

flapping of a sail, as if the wind had shifted, caught the ear of the officer on watch, and he sprang at once to the wheel, examining closely the compass. "You are a half-point off the course!" he said sharply to the man at the wheel. The deviation was corrected, and the officer returned to his post.

"You must steer very accurately," said the looker-on, "when only a half-point is so much thought of."

"Ah! half a point in many places might bring us directly on the rocks," he said.

So it is with our lives. Let us not dare go out of the old year a half-point wrong. To-day is the time to get right, by repentance of our sins and forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

It is possible for us to go out of the old year into the new with Jesus Christ as our companion. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." And we may have him as our guide through all the new year. He holds the keys of life, and if we keep close to him we shall walk in safety. A young girl walking out from the railroad station found a small key that had apparently fallen from some purse or key ring. As she picked it up she instinctively stopped to look for her own keys. Finding them safe, she gave a sigh of relief, and

went on her way. But the key in the street still held her thoughts. Were there not keys, invisible keys, to life itself, which were lost sometimes? Were not men and women lost because they had lost their keys? Jesus Christ holds the keys of life. He has been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin; he holds the keys of life's experience; every door shall open to his touch, and we may walk with him in perfect peace, not only to-morrow, but the day after, and forever.

XIV

THE PEACEMAKER'S PROMISE

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.—*Matthew v, 9.*

STRANGE as it may seem, the pulpit in all ages, from the days of Jesus Christ until now, has had a vast deal more to say concerning the soldier, the warrior, the aggressive personality, than it has about the peacemaker. When I had it in mind to prepare this discourse I searched through a large library containing many thousands of sermons without finding a single sermon on the subject of the peacemaker. I do not remember, in all the listening to sermons that has ever come to me, to have heard a sermon on the subject. Of course, there have been many sermons preached in which the Beatitudes have been taken up one by one, and the peacemaker has had his turn; but I have inquired among a number of ministers, and all have assured me that they had never preached on the subject. And yet I am sure that there is great need for the peacemaker, and that he must need encouragement.

Jesus Christ himself was the first great peacemaker in the Christian era, and he is the one who speaks these words of praise and promise toward the peacemaker. Three suggestions in these words of Christ are worthy of our study. The first is the thought of the personality represented here. A certain character is pronounced "blessed"—the character of the peacemaker. Every man cannot say, "To-day I will rise up and go forth and be a peacemaker." A man cannot succeed as a peacemaker without first developing the proper character for it. Character and life go together. The roots of life are in character, and there must be a certain soul culture, a certain mastery of the spirit, which makes it possible for a man to live the part of the peacemaker among his fellow men.

For instance, it is not possible for a man to succeed as a peacemaker who has not learned to control his own temper. Strife is carried on ordinarily by bitterness of spirit arising from the lack of self-control on the part of those connected with the strife. Now, if a man undertakes to bring peace to such strife, and is himself bitter and ungoverned in his temper, he will only make matters worse. This applies everywhere—among nations, in the differences between employers and employees, and in the control of families. Many

parents utterly fail in the proper discipline and development of their children because they do not know how to control their own tempers. They make their children more passionate and more lawless because they undertake to subdue them in a passionate spirit. You would not think much of a fireman, though he had the best of motives and the most industrious spirit, who, in undertaking to put out a fire, would go running into the threatened building carrying a flaming torch of pitchwood in his hand wherever he went. Yet the man who undertakes to bring peace among warring factions or contending spirits without having the mastery and control of his own temper carries a firebrand which makes it certain that he will do more harm than good. The very first condition in the evolution of a peacemaker is the mastery of his own spirit. The man who is peaceful and calm in his own heart, who holds his own temper in check, brings a quieting influence whenever he comes into consultation, which at once paves the way for peace. Have you never tried, when you were much excited, stating your grievance to a person peculiarly well poised, and found that your grievance did not seem nearly so flagrant after he had listened to it, though he may have said no word? The magic of his self-control,

somehow, took the sting out of it, and you were already in a better mood to respond to propositions looking to peace.

Henry M. Stanley, the most successful explorer of modern times, speaking of his hard school of experience, says: "For myself I lay no claim to any exceptional fineness of nature. But I say that, beginning life as a rough, ill-educated, impatient man, I have found my schooling in these very African experiences. I have learned by actual stress of imminent danger that self-control is more indispensable than gunpowder; and that persistent self-control is impossible without real, heartfelt sympathy." If Stanley had not acquired the power of self-control he could never have been the peacemaker he was on a thousand occasions where his success and his life depended upon it; and you and I cannot be the blessing we ought to be to the worried and fretted and perplexed men and women whom we meet amid the experiences of every day without learning the great lesson of the mastery of our tempers.

There is another thing akin to that, and that is the mastery of the tongue. We must not only master the temper, but we must learn to hold our tongues and compel them to not speak unless they speak the words of wisdom and kindness. No

man can be a peacemaker who lets his tongue run riot. The greatest incendiary in this world is an uncontrolled tongue—that is, a tongue uncontrolled by the spirit of Jesus Christ. James, with those keen figures of his that are sharp as saber thrusts, says: “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” And that is true of the human tongue wherever it is not mastered by the law of love. No man or woman can be a peacemaker who goes about talking carelessly. It does not need that they have any deep malice, and go around slandering people with a deliberate purpose to do harm in the world. It is only necessary that they let silly, unrul’d tongues waggle to do the devil’s business of stirring up strife, of separating friends, poisoning the life-blood of good will in church or social life. If we are to be peacemakers, we must learn to hold our tongues and master

them so that they shall not speak except under the direction of the spirit of love.

Now, if we have that kind of a personality, mastering our own tempers and our own tongues by the aid of the great Peacemaker, then we are able to enter the lists for this great blessing promised to the peacemakers. If we have attained to that self-mastery we have the character, and we are now ready by the grace of God to act the part.

In the work of the peacemaker it is very essential that we shall hold ourselves rigidly to the charitable consideration of the faults of other people. We need to remember that while there is no one in this world without flaws and imperfections, no one perfectly good, so there is no one perfectly bad, no one as bad as he might be. And so in dealing with the very worst people we shall cruelly misjudge them if we put the worst construction on their motives or on their conduct. If that is true in dealing with the worst, how much more true in dealing with people who are more than fairly good, the people whom we meet in our homes and in our church and in the ordinary affairs of our daily life. If we put the worst construction on their conduct in our judgment of them, we are constantly slandering them in our thoughts—and, if we speak our thoughts, in our

words. Children are often discouraged in trying to be good because a construction which they never dreamed of is put upon their motives. They are made to seem so much worse than they really are that they are disheartened and give up to the temptation to be bad. If we are going to act as peacemakers we must put the best construction on the faults of others, and in that way we shall come into sympathetic touch with anyone who is in the wrong. They will feel our kindness and our sense of justice, and nine people out of ten will respond to it.

The peacemaker must know the value of time. There is no place where promptness counts for more than in the undertaking to make peace between people who have had a misunderstanding, for every moment counts when wicked tempers are aroused. What is only a little thing at first grows into a quarrel, and if allowed to run it grows into a feud, and many a time in the history of the world it has grown into a great war that has cost tens of thousands of human lives. And every bit of personal strife has these stages of evolution. The time to settle disagreements and misunderstandings is the moment you know about them. If it is your own case, and you know that some one feels vexed with you or hurt with you, go at

once in a spirit of love and concession and have it out. Let in the sunlight of a clear understanding, for a misapprehension allowed to fester and brood in the imagination will soon make a mountain out of a molehill. So if you would keep the peace among others, be prompt to begin at once, while it is a little thing and while it is still new.

I stood upon the rim of the crater of Vesuvius on one occasion when it was in eruption and was throwing out large quantities of lava. When this lava first came into the air it would run like water, it was so yielding, but in the course of a few minutes it began to harden, and if left for a little while it would become like the hardest rock. So it is with strife between human beings. It is at first soft and yielding, and may be molded; but if you let it alone it settles down into hate and prejudice that will do infinite harm and be almost impossible to remove.

We have spoken of the character and the service of the peacemaker. We have yet to speak of his reward. Our Master says that he is a blessed character and he shall be called the child of God. That surely means that he is the child of God, for God never fails to call things by their right names. The world looks on the outside and often names people very differently from the name by which

God knows them, since he looks at the heart and judges them with perfect wisdom. You remember that prosperous farmer concerning whom Jesus spoke, who was given up to the things of the world and was very successful. His fields were so fruitful and produced such enormous crops that he had no room to store away his harvests; yet no thought of generosity came to him, no thought of sharing with others. He had no compassion and no sympathy for the poor because he had such abundance. The blessings of God only fattened his greed, and he said to himself and to his neighbors, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." No doubt through all the community this man was known as the rich man, the successful man, the happy man; but God had a different name for him, and that very night he blazed it forth before the man's astonished gaze as he said to him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The world said, "Successful," "Rich," "Great," "Happy." God said, "Fool." And fool he was; for God named him correctly.

There was a king in Babylon, very rich, very powerful, very successful in the eyes of all the

nations. His walls were thought to be invincible; his armies made the earth afraid; his warehouses were full of treasure. He gave a great feast, and there were a thousand covers at the dinner. The rarest wines were drunk from the golden vessels from old temples ransacked and robbed. The courtiers shouted, and called him "the great King," "the Victor," "the Successful." But God had another name for him, and he sent a bodiless hand to write on the walls of the dining hall, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting." God called him "the Defeated." That night he was slain.

God calls people by their right names, and Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." There could be no sweeter promise than that we shall be named by our heavenly Father as his children. Paul enlarges on what that means. He says, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This is the very perfection of reward, for better than any gift that might be bestowed upon us outward in its nature is the gift of personal relationship to God; to be

adopted into his family, so that we are his heirs and are joint-heirs with Jesus. Then the love of Heaven toward Jesus Christ is turned toward us in equal measure. Did angels come to the garden of Gethsemane and into the wilderness of temptation to comfort Jesus? Then they shall come to us when we need them, and minister to us as the heirs of salvation. All fear shall be taken out of our hearts. For we are neither orphans nor slaves nor hired servants. We are the children of God. Let us sit at the feet of the great Peacemaker and acquire this glorious personality that we may enjoy its blessed reward.

XV

THE FOUR WHEELS OF DIVINE PROMISE

I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.—*Isaiah* xlii, 6, 7.

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL, the poet saint, whose songs breathe an atmosphere of Christian confidence unsurpassed by any writer outside of the Bible, used these words as her chariot of fire to bear her home. On the last day of her life she asked a friend to read her this forty-second chapter of *Isaiah*. When the friend had reached these verses which I have chosen for our text Miss Havergal stopped her. "Called, held, kept, used," she whispered. "Well, I will just go home on that." And she did go home on that, making it her celestial chariot, which no one doubts had abundant entrance through the pearly gates into the city of gold.

I want to follow the analysis made by the dying poet. I am sure we shall find a sermon in it that

will comfort our hearts and strengthen our faith in the promises of God.

The first wheel of this celestial chariot is our divine calling. Every one of us has been called of God. There is something sublime about it, something which lifts life up out of the dirt and the smoke of earth and reminds us of our divine kinship. There is not one here whose life has been so worldly and so thoughtless of spiritual things but that you have been conscious at some period of your life, and some of you on many occasions, that you were divinely called to turn from your sin and serve God. You may have silenced the call in your conscience, and refused it, but the call came, and all its divine possibilities were within your reach, and in the great day of judgment, if you should find yourself shut out from heaven because of your sins, you could not say, "I had no chance, I was never called." In the clear light of that hour the memory of that call of God will come back to you and stand up in judgment against you.

But are there not many who have heard God's call and responded to it who are tempted to forget the great honor that has come to them, and who live sometimes day after day without thinking much of the fact that the infinite God has spoken

to them, and called them to the life of righteousness? Nothing kills love like indifference and thoughtlessness. Dr. Newman Hall compares the love that is in the soul of the Christian in response to God's call to a fire kindled from above. But the fire will soon go out unless we furnish the fuel. And the fuel on which this kind of fire feeds is meditation on the love of God, the worship of God, and the doing of those things which please him. But all the fuel one can put into a furnace only stifles it unless at the same time we admit the air, and the vitalizing air that keeps alive the flame of love in our hearts is the breath of constant prayer. Paul had this in his mind when he said to some people who had been called of God through his word that the secret of a happy and strong Christian was in "praying always with all prayer."

Alexander Maclaren has this illustration for those who, having been called of God, are in danger of losing touch with him and falling back again into worldliness. He says that unless you put out your water-jars when it rains you will catch no water; if you do not watch for God coming to help you, God's watching to be gracious will be of no good at all to you. His watching is not a substitute for ours; but because he watches, there-

fore we should watch. Are you watching day by day for the presence of God in your life? Are you living worthy of that divine calling?

The second wheel of this heavenly chariot is the divine holding. "I will hold thine hand." If God is not holding our hand and leading us it is our own fault. I saw a mother the other day leading her little child in the park. So long as the mother led it, it went safely. But finally it concluded that it wanted to get away from the mother's holding, though the mother held on quite persistently and spoke persuasively, seeking to make the little one content to leave its baby hand in hers. At last, however, with a sudden little gust of self-will, the child jerked its hand from the mother's, and ran down the walk ahead as fast as it could. It had not gone thirty feet before it fell and cried aloud with pain. So when God calls us and we respond to his call he takes our hand in his. He will never let go except our self-will takes it away. Do you ask why God does not hold on anyhow, whether we desire it or not? If he were to do that we would be only slaves, not free men and women. But so long as we leave our hand in the divine hand he will hold fast, and we shall be divinely led. A blessed thing about God's leadership is that not only will he lead us

on the right path, and in safe ways, but he will lead us into ever larger and more splendid personality. I have seen many men and women who were of very little account while they were led by the evil one, but when they broke away from Satan's guidance and gave themselves up to be led by the divine hand they grew into intellectual and moral and spiritual beauty until it was hard to believe that they were the same persons who were so unlovable at the beginning.

Dr. O. P. Gifford, speaking of the blessing which comes to a man who surrenders himself to the Holy Spirit, compares it to the development which has come to certain flowers through cultivation. You go into a hothouse and you see a bewildering mass of beauty. It is the season of chrysanthemums. The gardener talks to you about the evolution of the chrysanthemum. He says it started as a little daisy, and from it was evolved this beautiful flower. But how was it evolved? It was transferred to a hothouse built by a man, and the flower was tended by a man. The chrysanthemum is a daisy plus a man. Remove the flower from the hothouse and the heat and soil, take away all the human element, and in ten years you will have a daisy. The chrysanthemum is a daisy plus a man, and the Christian is a

man plus God. All the beautiful graces that make some lives so glorious have been brought about through spiritual culture; they have come through the yielding to God's guidance and leadership. What folly to willfully take our hands away from God's holding!

The third wheel of this heavenly chariot is the divine keeping. In another place Isaiah says in an address to God, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." This gives us the secret of God's keeping. It is not arbitrary, he will not keep us against our will; but if we lovingly stay our minds and hearts upon him nothing can ever take us out of his hand. The most wonderful illustrations that could possibly be used are used in the Bible to show us the safety of Christians who leave themselves in God's hands. The Christian is compared to the apple of the eye. As long as a man has life he will fight to protect the apple of his eye. It is the tenderest and most sensitive point. And yet we are assured that so long as we love and trust God we are as the apple of his eye to him. Again we are compared to the signet ring on the finger, and still again to precious jewels, which are always either worn or kept in the secret chamber, the personal treasure of the king.

But if we are to be thus related to God we must stay our hearts upon him in prayerful meditation. The danger point of our age is the lack of secret prayer. Busy, hard-worked people think they have no time for it; but the fact is that the loss is so serious and sometimes so utterly fatal that we should make time for it. Better cut out the time anywhere else than there, for the very purpose we are living for on earth depends for its fulfillment on our being kept of God. Secret prayer alone can tone up a Christian to meet the stress of life bravely and patiently.

Henry Ward Beecher says that he was one day with Mr. Hicks, the painter, when he saw on his table some high-colored stones, and he asked him what they were for. The artist said they were to keep his eye up to tone. When he was working in pigments, insensibly his sense of color was weakened, and by having a pure color near him he brought it up again; just as the musician by his tuning fork brings himself up to the right pitch. And so every day as Christians we need above everything else to come into sensible communion with the invisible God. None of us are so strong or so pure but that we need every day to be tuned, chorded, and borne up to the idea of a pure and lofty life.

Many here have found their personal experience described in those sweet lines of Father Ryan in which he portrays his experience in the "Valley of Silence."

"I walk down the Valley of Silence—
Down the dim, voiceless valley—alone!
And I hear not the fall of a footstep
Around me, save God's and my own;
And the hush of my heart is as holy
As heaven when angels have flown.

"Long ago was I weary of voices
Whose music my heart could not win;
Long ago was I weary of noises
That fretted my soul with their din;
Long ago was I weary of places
Where I met but the human—and sin.

"I walked in the world with the worldly;
I craved what the world never gave;
And I said, 'In the world each Ideal
That shines like a star on life's wave
Is wrecked on the shores of the Real,
And sleeps, like a dream, in a grave.'

"And still did I pine for the Perfect;
And still found the False with the True;
I sought 'mid the Human for Heaven,
But caught a mere glimpse of its blue;
And I wept when the clouds of the Mortal
Veiled even that glimpse from my view.

"And I toiled on, heart-tired of the Human,
And I moaned 'mid the mazes of men,
Till I knelt, long ago, at an altar,
And I heard a Voice call me. Since then
I walk down the Valley of Silence
That lies far beyond mortal ken.

"Do you ask what I found in the Valley?
'Tis my trysting-place with the Divine.
And I fell at the feet of the Holy,
And above me a voice said, 'Be Mine.'
Then arose from the depth of my spirit
An echo—'My heart shall be Thine.'

"Do you ask how I live in the Valley?
I weep, and I dream, and I pray;
But my tears are as sweet as the dewdrops
That fall on the roses in May;
And my prayer, like a perfume from censers,
Ascendeth to God night and day.

"In the hush of the Valley of Silence
I dream all the songs that I sing;
And the music floats down the dim Valley
Till each finds a word for a wing,
That to hearts, like the Dove of the Deluge,
A message of peace they may bring.

"But far on the deep there are billows
That never shall break on the beach;
And I have heard songs in the Silence
That never shall float into speech;
And I have had dreams in the Valley
Too lofty for language to reach.

"And I have seen thoughts in the Valley—
 Ah, me! how my spirit was stirred!
 And they wear holy veils on their faces,
 Their footsteps can scarcely be heard;
 They pass through the Valley like virgins,
 Too pure for the touch of a word.

"Do you ask me the place of the Valley,
 Ye hearts that are harrowed by care?
 It lieth afar between mountains,
 And God and his angels are there;
 And one is the dark mount of Sorrow,
 And one the bright mountain of Prayer."

The fourth wheel of this heavenly chariot is in that we are divinely used. That is the highest honor God can put upon us. He honors us by using us. To be of use to the world is far greater than to be happy in it or successful, according to any worldly standard. In a cemetery not far from New York city there is a monument which attracts more attention than any other, which has on it this simple inscription, "To the Memory of Aunt Nell." This is the story: A poor woman, who lived in a humble little house, and who lived a very hard life, in spite of her poverty took a great interest in poor country boys, and whenever she found one sick or in hard luck she did in her simple way what she could to help him. One day a little lad, coming down with typhoid fever, laid

his burning head on her doorstep. She took him in and ministered to him until he got well, and sent him away with her blessing. He was an unpromising little fellow, working at five dollars a month in a truck garden, but he went West and grew into a successful man. Not long ago he came back to hunt up the woman who had been good to him. He meant to make her happy for the rest of her life, and it is said that he sat down and sobbed like a child when he found that she was dead. So he went over into the cemetery and set up that marble stone to the memory of Aunt Nell, and across the top inscribed, "Erected by one to whom she was kind years ago." I don't suppose that white stone matters to the little woman, but the loving service which prompted it has been treasured up in God's heart.

Is God using you? The divinest spiritual insight, the noblest visions of life, will always come through service. As we let God use us we shall see all things with clearer eyes. I have heard the story of a minister who on Saturday night bent wearily over a half-finished sermon. There had been a domestic revolution, and the help had deserted; the weather was hot; the minister was tired. As he worked hopelessly at his sermon, he heard in the chamber above a still more weary

wife trying to soote a restless baby. The minister braced himself to his task, sure that his duty lay before him. But, yielding at last, he dropped his slow-moving pen, and going to the chamber above took the crying child. The exhausted mother fell asleep; and the child, feeling the soothing touch of the new hand, also fell asleep in the father's arms. Then, sitting in the peaceful stillness of the twilight, he found his sermon coming with a freshness and power which he had missed in his weary strife. So that which began as a wearisome sacrifice ended in refreshment and success. That experience is a parable of life. As we let God use us he is able to teach us things, lessons that we never can learn except in the atmosphere of service. We are always sure of coming in touch with Jesus when God uses us in service. Hear our text again: "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." There is the way God wants to use us. The solemn question we want to ask to-day is whether we are giving ourselves to God to be thus used. God has called us. We want him to lead us and

keep us. We desire the comforts and the blessings of the Christian life. Are we giving ourselves to be used of God? I pray God that we may have this day a vision of Jesus, our divine Lord, and hear him as he questions us:

"Have ye looked for sheep in the desert,
For those who have missed their way?
Have ye been in the wild, waste places,
Where the lost and the wandering stray?
Have ye trodden the lonely highway,
The foul and darksome street?
It may be ye'd see in the gloaming
The prints of My wounded feet.

"Have ye folded home to your bosom
The trembling, neglected lamb?
And taught to the little lost one
The sound of the Shepherd's name?
Have ye searched for the poor and needy,
With no clothing, no home, no bread?
The Son of man was among them,
He had nowhere to lay his head!

"Have ye carried the living water
To the parched and thirsty soul?
Have ye said to the sick and wounded,
'Christ Jesus makes thee whole'?
Have ye told My fainting children
Of the strength of the Father's hand?
Have ye guided the tottering footsteps
To the shores of the 'Golden Land'?

"Have ye stood by the sad and weary
To smooth the pillow of death,
To comfort the sorrow-stricken,
And strengthen the feeble faith?
And have ye felt when the glory
Has streamed through the open door,
And flitted across the shadows,
That I had been there before?

"Have ye wept with the broken-hearted
In their agony of woe?
Ye might hear Me whisp'ring beside you,
'Tis a pathway I often go.
My disciples, My brethren, My friends,
Can ye dare to follow Me?
Then, wherever the Master is dwelling,
There shall the servant be."

XVI

THE PROMISED CONQUEST OF THE IMAGINATION

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds; casting down imaginations.—2 *Corinthians* x, 4, 5 (R. V.).

OUR theme is difficult because it belongs to the realm of the unseen and spiritual, whose priceless values are not easily measured. It is easy to weigh and measure gross material things. It is easy to tell what they will do under a given set of conditions. It is a simple matter to compute the force of a waterfall like Niagara, to draw off a portion of it, as has already been done, and to harness it down to the work of civilization. A bright engineer can readily calculate beforehand just how many spindles it will turn, how many canal boats it will drive, or how many trolley cars it will speed on their way, or how many towns a hundred miles distant it will light up. Given the weight of a cannon ball and the number of ounces of powder exploded behind it, it is not hard to tell through how many miles of space it will be hurled, and through how many feet of

timber or inches of iron plating it will forge its way when it strikes.

But when we undertake to weigh love, or hope, or fear, or ambition, or fancy, it is more difficult. Who could have foretold, for instance, how much vitality there would be left in David's Shepherd Psalm after being thrown across a gulf of forty centuries? Who could have foretold how much power would have been left in Shakespeare's plays two hundred years after he had vanished from the earth? Who could have prophesied the vital force there would have been remaining in the conversations of Jesus after nearly nineteen hundred years had come and gone?

Nothing seems so elusive, when we try to measure it, as the imagination; and yet it is the creative element in the mind in every sort of constructive work, whether of the mathematician, the inventor, the explorer, the poet, the painter, or the prophet of religion.

Herbert Spencer says that, "rightly conceived, imagination is the power of mental representation, and is measured by the vividness and truth of this representation." So understood, he says, it belongs not only to poets, but not less to men of science; and he goes so far as to assert that the mathematician who discloses to us some previously

unknown order of space relations does so by a far greater effort of imagination than is implied by any poetic creation, and that the constructive imagination is the highest of human faculties.

Imagination has its basis in the capacity of the mind to produce mental images. Some persons are able to call up an exact picture of a friend, clear and vivid; and others can hear music over again, as distinctly as at the first. In most persons this capacity exists—strong in those of great imaginative powers; while in some it appears to have only the feeblest existence. The constructive or creative imagination is that which can reshape these mental images at will, bring out of them what had before no existence, and give to airy nothings a local habitation and a name. In *Midsummer Night's Dream* Shakespeare makes Theseus say:

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact.
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold—
That is the madman; the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt;
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to
heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear!"

Much that we usually assign to reason undoubtedly has its origin with the imagination, for to the imagination must be assigned the larger part of all constructive and original thought. The imagination is often strong enough to overcome all surrounding circumstances and cause a man to live as though they were not. Emerson was walking down Bromfield Street in Boston in the time of the Millerite excitement, when a friend met him and said, "Mr. Emerson, you know the world is to come to an end to-day." The philosopher looked up, with far-away eyes, which indicated that he was greatly absorbed in some thoughts of his own, and placidly remarked, "Very well, we can get along without it."

The imagination also has a power to give to the poor man all the sensations of wealth, and on the other hand to give to the rich man all the mental woes of poverty. A distinguished French writer relates that Balzac, the great French novelist, had a craving for living grandly while he was yet very

poor. This writer relates that he on one occasion visited the French publisher Charpentier. He was ushered into the publisher's room, and found him in conversation with a stout man whom he did not know.

"Yes, my dear Charpentier," said the stout man, "it is going to be a complete surprise to my mother; she doesn't know a thing about it. You see, the chateau and grounds are laid out in this way." And then the man went on and drew imaginary lines on the floor with his cane, and in brilliant language described in the most picturesque and fascinating way the different rooms of the great chateau, the various outbuildings, the parks, and the gardens, and all the luxurious accessories of a rich man's estate. The poor man of letters who sat listening gaped in wide-mouthed wonder and admiration at the description.

By and by the talker went away with a grand air, and the other visitor ventured to ask, "Who was that gentleman?"

"That was Balzac," said the publisher.

"Balzac! why, he must be making a great deal of money out of his novels."

The publisher smiled.

"What do you suppose he came to see me about this morning? It was to get me to advance him

five hundred francs on his next volume—which isn't written yet—to pay his board bill!"

Then the wondering young man understood that he had witnessed the building of an air castle.

The imagination has power to change the very atmosphere a man breathes so far as his consciousness is able to register it. A well-known gentleman was once staying overnight in a strange room. He had paid little attention to the circumstances of the room on retiring. He awoke in the night and felt himself smothering for lack of air. He got up and went to the window, and tried to lift the sash, but could not. He tugged away at it for some time, and finally, when it would not move, being rather quick-tempered, he gave such a lunge on it that he broke a pane of glass. Then he drew in a deep breath, filling his lungs with the fresh air from the outside, and went back to bed and, falling asleep, slept till morning. You can imagine his astonishment to find when he awoke that he had broken a pane of glass in a bookcase.

It is certain that there is no such teacher in the great realm of human nature as fiction. Is its power not in the fact that men feel intuitively that the man or woman portrayed imaginatively by the true artist in fiction is more near the true, real man than any we can find in any other way?

Take those wonderful Scotch stories of Ian Maclaren in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* and *Auld Lang Syne*. A few years ago the whole civilized world were laughing and crying over the Scotchmen in the Highland glens. Their power is that we see them in a halo of warm imagination. I suppose that if we were to hunt the glens through we should never recognize, with our poor prosaic vision, such women as Marget, such doctors as William MacLure, or such worldly-wise saints as Drumsheugh. And yet, no doubt Maclaren has given us the truest portraits of Highlanders yet portrayed. Many an old Scot, reading those pictures, has been fain to cry out, "God knows I wanted to be just such a man as that!"

Just now we are having a great stream of historical fiction. No other books have so wide a reading as these. It must be that the multitude feel that here they are getting the truest history. I remember many years ago that General O. O. Howard said to me, speaking of the history of the civil war, that it was his conviction that the truest history would be written by some of the great writers of fiction who would arise a generation or more after the events had passed away.

I have dwelt so at length on these introductory thoughts because I feel that many of us do not

properly estimate the importance of the proper education and control of the imagination. The fact is that the higher education of youth is likely to do enormous harm unless it is dominated by the Christian spirit. It is possible to educate a boy and give him the most perfect opportunity for the development of his mind and have only a polished devil after you have him finished off. The great value of Christian colleges is largely in this very fact. Education sets the imagination free, gives it strong wings, gives it the ability of flight; but that will be a curse instead of a blessing unless the imagination be mastered and directed and controlled in righteousness. Man's imagination, which was intended to be "the candle of the Lord," may be lighted at the devil's fire and become a baleful torch that will only illuminate the way to disaster and death.

Sin entered the world through the imagination. That was how the serpent gained his first power over Eve. He told her that if she ate of the forbidden fruit she would become as wise as a god and know everything. What could be more tempting to a perfect feminine creation, such as Eve was? Her imagination hung around that statement, brooded over it until it burst all bounds.

Men to-day are led into sin by the imagination.

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Some time ago counterfeit silver dollars appeared which had more silver in them than the ordinary dollar issued by the government, and yet the price of silver bullion was so low that it was a great fraud on the government. Then a secret service officer remembered that two or three years before, in a liquor saloon in San Francisco, he had heard some men conversing on the subject of counterfeiting, and an old miner standing by had expressed the wonder that nobody had ever thought of making silver dollars out of pure silver. He declared it never could be detected, and when silver was cheap it would be a good business. This detective officer reasoned that in all probability the miner who had conceived that idea was at the bottom of the present counterfeiting. He set out on the chase, and after several months ran him to earth and found he was correct. The man had never thought of doing it at first, but he let his imagination play on it, until, after a while, being hard up for money, it got the better of him, and he did it. That is a typical sin. Men think about a sin, they imagine and muse about it for a while, and then, when the proper opportunity comes, they do it. All sin is consciously or unconsciously born that way.

Some strange passages of Scripture become

clear as day in the light of our discussion. Take the saying of James that a man who hates his brother is a murderer, and that other statement of Jesus Christ, that a class of men who hate another circle of their fellow beings are "whited sepulchers, full of dead men's bones," and see how, when you bring them together in the light of the importance of the imagination, they fit into one another. A great many men commit murder in their imagination, and incur its guilt, who never have a chance to do it with their hands. They used to say of some desperado out on the frontier, "He keeps a private graveyard of his own." Of course, they had reference to the number of men he had killed. But in the light of our theme this morning we can see how many outwardly decorous and even professedly Christian men and women, who sit in church pews, keep "a private graveyard of their own"; and down deep in their secret imaginations lie bleaching the bones of the men and women whom they have slain. No wonder some people have a surly expression and a sort of moldy smell to their conversation, when we recognize that they are walking graveyards.

No teacher appeals so strongly to the imagination as Jesus Christ. Christianity owes its mighty missionary movements, which are filling the earth

with the fragrance and glory of his name, to that far-reaching imaginative word-picture recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew's Life of Jesus, in which he calls upon every sincere disciple to see in the most neglected and broken man or woman or child the image and very personality of his divine Lord. How beautifully our own James Russell Lowell has illustrated this in his poetic version of the story of Sir Launfal and the search for the Holy Grail. Many of you recall the story of the young knight who went away proud and self-sufficient in his young manhood in search of the Holy Grail, and who, as he went, was asked an alms by a poor beggar, to whom he flung a gift with scornful contempt. Years afterward he came back, old and frail, and again found a beggar at the gate; but this time his treatment was very different. Lowell says:

"But Sir Launfal sees only the grewsome thing,—
The leper, lank as the rain-blanchèd bone,
That cowers beside him, a thing as lone
And white as the ice-isles of Northern seas
In the desolate horror of his disease.

"And Sir Launfal said: 'I behold in thee
An image of Him who died on the tree;
Thou also hast had thy crown of thorns—
Thou also hast had the world's buffets and scorns,

And to thy life were not denied
 The wounds in the hands and feet and side:
 Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;
 Behold, through him, I give to thee!

“As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,
 A light shone round about the place;
 The leper no longer crouched at his side,
 But stood before him glorified,
 Shining and tall and fair and straight
 As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—
 Himself the Gate whereby men can
 Enter the temple of God in man.

“His words were shed softer than leaves from the pine,
 And they fell on Sir Launfal as snows on the brine,
 That mingle their softness and quiet in one
 With the shaggy unrest they float down upon;
 And the voice that was softer than silence said:—
 ‘Lo, it is I, be not afraid!
 In many climes, without avail,
 Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;
 Behold it is here,—this cup which thou
 Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;
 This crust is my body broken for thee,
 This water his blood that died on the tree;
 The Holy Supper is kept indeed
 In whatso we share with another's need;
 Not what we give, but what we share—
 For the gift without the giver is bare;
 Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
 Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.’”

XVII

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO A TIRED WORLD

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.—*Matthew xi, 28, 29.*

TISSOT, the artist, told a very interesting story of a vision which came to him in a cathedral in Paris, and was the reason for his wonderful career as a painter of the Christ and the scenes of his life. He was in Paris painting a series of pictures representing the pursuits of the society women of the city of fashion. At that time it was fashionable among the rich and the gay to sing in the choir of some great church, and he wished to make a study for his picture, "The Choir Singer." With this purpose in mind he went to the Church of Saint Sulpice during mass, more to catch its atmosphere for his picture than with any idea of worship. But he soon found himself joining in the devotions, and as the host was elevated and he bowed his head and closed his eyes there came before the inner eye of his imagination a wonderful picture that thrilled him to the very soul. It

seemed to him that he was looking at the ruins of a castle. The windows were broken, the cornices and drains lay shattered on the ground; cannon balls and broken bowls added to the debris. And then a peasant and his wife picked their way over the littered ground; wearily he threw down his bundle that contained their all, and the woman seated herself on a fallen pillar, burying her face in her hands. Her husband, too, sat down, but, in pity for her sorrow, strove to sit upright, to play the man even in misfortune; and then there came a strange figure of a man gliding toward these human ruins over the broken remnants of the castle. His feet and hands were pierced and bleeding, his head was wreathed with thorns, while from his shoulders fell an Oriental cloak inscribed with the scenes of the "Fall of Man," the "Kiss of Judas." And this figure, needing no name, seated himself by the poor peasant, and leaned his head upon his shoulder, seeming to say, more by the outstretched hands than in worship, "See, I have been more miserable than you; I am the solution of all your problems; without me civilization is a ruin." This vision pursued Tissot after he had left the church. It stood between him and his canvas. He tried to brush it away; but it persisted in returning. Finally he

painted the vision. He interpreted this vision as a call to him to leave the gay butterflies of fashion and set himself to paint the Christ who has redeemed the world and has power to give rest to the souls of men.

Our text is Christ's great appeal to the burdened and the tired, and that makes it an appeal to the great mass of men and women. Men everywhere are groaning under their burdens, and need comfort and inspiration and fellowship to make the burdens light and the yoke of life easy. Christ may have been led to make this exclamation by noting the heavy burdens which the poor people of his day were compelled to carry on their heads or their shoulders. He thus gave expression to the great conviction of his soul that he was to make the burdens of men lighter. How wonderfully that promise has been realized! Wherever Christ has been preached and any people, in any country, in any age, have come to recognize Christ in any degree, in just so far have the burdens been lifted from the shoulders of men. There was not a king in the world in the days of Jesus who could have as many comforts for bodily health as very poor people may have now in our towns and cities. No longer is the water carried in a leathern bottle on the heads of the women; no longer must food be

cooked over a smoking fire built on the ground in the center of wigwam or camp. No longer must the clothing be made by hand. Pass on from one department of toil to another, and you will find that in every field of burdensome labor the quickened brain of Christian lands is lifting the burdens from the shoulders of toiling men and women. And this is to go on until the bitterness is taken out of the dregs of the cup of labor. In Jesus's day nearly all the working people in the world were slaves; but age by age the Carpenter of Nazareth has been the strongest personality to which appeal could be made in the struggle for better wages and shorter hours and a nobler life in every way for the workers of the world. Jesus Christ has given a dignity and a nobility to labor, and he will yet lift all cruel and oppressive burdens.

Sin is the great burden maker for the human life. Sin it was that enslaved men in the days of old, and sin it is that holds them in bondage and burdens them now as does nothing else. The devil promises pleasure and happiness in sin, but he is false, and John Ruskin tells the truth when he says, "No man ever enjoyed doing wrong since the world began." There is a momentary intoxication in sinful pleasures, but there is a bitterness

and a remorse and a stinging regret which follow, which make it impossible for the soul to find rest. Robert Burns spoke from experience when he said:

“But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed!
Or like the snow-fall in the river,
A moment white—then melts forever.”

Lord Byron spoke out of the fullness of bitter reality when he wailed:

“My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flower and fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.”

And these experiences are typical of the results of sin always. In the end it lays heavy burdens on men's shoulders, heavy loads upon the heart, which it will not touch with the tip of a finger.

Many young men and many young women are drawn into sin by the promise of good-fellowship. The devil tells them that sinners are more friendly and more given to good-fellowship than are Christians, and so like the Prodigal they give themselves over to friends who are by no means steadfast when the day of trouble comes. Some of you will recall how Thackeray tells us of young Mr. Warrington, the Virginian, who, after living in a

gay and fashionable circle in London, and winning and losing large sums of money at the card table, at last found himself in jail for debt. He did not take it seriously at first, and in a gay fashion he sent notes round to his friends, fondly imagining that each would be eager to liberate him from his imprisonment. But he was greatly surprised to receive notes back from all of them, giving the very best of reasons and excuses why not one of them could give him a penny. And Thackeray was true to life.

There is an old story told in Persia of a Persian prince who came among the people in the Great Hall clad in an ordinary dress; and he found that everyone, even the servants in the Hall, hustled him about, insulted him, and abused him. He withdrew rapidly and went and put on his princely garments and returned, and then everyone was bowing before him, and he said, with a bitter truth, "You should not say, 'My lord,' to me, but say, 'My lord coat,' for it is the coat you seem to respect and not the man." And every prodigal has found, like the Prodigal in Christ's story, that the friendships and fellowships made in sin, no matter how fascinating and intoxicating at the time, result only in heavier burdens and more cruel heartaches.

Now, to all such burdened hearts, who have sought happiness and satisfaction in sin and found only disappointment, Christ comes offering a divine rest of soul. No man or woman is so burdened but Christ will keep his promise to give perfect rest if you will come to him. Do not try to ease your burdens by any self-righteousness. Bring them all to Christ. Saint Augustine tells us that one day in Milan, when his sins burdened him until he could stand it no longer, he went out alone into the garden behind his house and threw himself down in great trouble of soul. He seemed then to hear a voice shouting the words, "Take up and read! Take up and read!" As he reflected, it seemed it must be the oracle of God to his own soul, "Take up and read." If that were true, there was only one book to read, of course, and so he went into his room and opened the New Testament and read the words, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." And in Christ he found rest so sweet and beautiful that he afterward exclaimed: "Too late, too late, have I loved thee, O thou ancient and most fresh Loveliness." So it will seem to you if you will open God's

Word and read, or if you will hearken to it as I speak it to you. There will come to you such a peace, such a rest of forgiveness and confidence of soul, that you will marvel that such loveliness could be in the world and you utterly oblivious to it for so long.

"Ah, but," some one says, "there is a yoke and a burden in Christianity." Yes, indeed! To become a Christian does not mean to escape loyalty and service. But what kind of a yoke is it? It is not a yoke that chafes the shoulder, it is not a yoke that indicates ignoble servitude. It is a yoke that binds us to the noblest and holiest endeavor, it is a yoke which promises for us the most honorable and glorious career that can possibly come to us. I was reading not long ago of the supreme happiness that had come to a young lady who was a student of art and had shown great talent in the pursuit of her studies as a sculptor. This young woman had finally been received as a student by the famous Saint Gaudens. Now, she was only a student, a disciple, of the great sculptor. To be that meant hard work, self-denying toil, and exertion. It meant the putting herself into a yoke more severe, so far as earnest work was concerned, than any commonplace teacher would exact. But the opportunity was received with hearty congrat-

ulations on the part of her friends, and it was regarded as a high honor and a noble privilege. The honor and the privilege made all the burden of exertion seem light and made the yoke easy. So in the higher realm of the soul Christ is the great soul-sculptor in the universe. Here is the one perfect Teacher, the one absolutely perfect Expert in what it takes to make manhood and womanhood. To be under him, to be instructed by him, to have his gracious teaching, his inspiration, his encouragement, means to us the possibility of creating the noblest and most beautiful character that is attainable. If it is a great thing for a young sculptor to be a disciple of Saint Gaudens, how much more wonderful a thing it is for a poor sinner who desires to become noble and holy and good to have a chance to bear the burden and wear the yoke of a loving discipleship to Jesus Christ. Yet that is your divine privilege. Do not delay about accepting it. Press into the kingdom this very hour!

XVIII

PROMISED SECURITY FOR SPIRITUAL TREASURES

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.—*Matthew* vi, 19, 20.

THE desire to lay up treasures is part and parcel of our human nature and of the best side of our human nature. It is the savage who does not treasure anything. He does not lay up food; he eats until he is in pain when he has taken plenty of game in the chase, or the fish have rushed into his net, or the season has been rich in nuts or fruits that grow on the wild trees or shrubs. But he has no cold storage, no barn, no treasure-house against the day of need. He lives from hand to mouth, and often both the hand and the mouth are empty. The growth of civilization develops in man this desire to treasure up something for the future. It also encourages the laying up of treasures that are not needed simply to eat or to wear, but treasures that are meant to adorn or to beau-

tify, and which become treasures through the growth of imagination and the development of love and fellowship in an intelligent, civilized society.

Now there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus Christ that would put a stop to or frown upon the laying up of treasures to meet the rational needs of human life. But there is very earnest teaching by our Saviour to the point that all earthly treasures, which have to do with our eating, and drinking, and wearing, and the adornment or comfort of the body, must be regarded not as of first but of secondary importance. Jesus's message is, "Seek first the kingdom of God." He supplements this statement by saying that our heavenly Father recognizes our need of these earthly treasures, but that we must never for a moment forget that the thing we are to seek *first* is the kingdom of God. We are not to suppose that treasures which can be put away in a safe deposit vault, whether they be deeds, or certificates of stock, or gold, or jewels, are of first importance as treasures. They are only secondary treasures upon which we have a very temporary title, a temporary lease at the will of God. It may end in twenty years from now, it may end within an hour. We have no control over it. Earthly treasures are temporary

for many other reasons; they may depreciate in value, or they may be stolen. So the Saviour assures us that nothing could be more foolish than for a man to regard as his chief treasures these earthly things, when it is possible for him to be rich in spiritual treasures that cannot be corrupted, that no moth can touch, no thief can steal, and to which he may have a title as enduring as the soul itself.

O my friends, let me urge upon you the emphasis which Jesus Christ puts on seeking spiritual treasures *first!* Give them your first flush of youth and enthusiasm; give them your first zest of life; pour the full tide of your youthful courage and vigor down the one flume that turns the wheel of your spiritual nature. It will color and mold and fashion your entire career in a large and generous and heavenly way. Nothing is more pitiable than to see men and women in the churches who have given all their first enthusiasm, their first courage, their first vigor, their first toil to the service of mammon, and left spiritual matters a very poor second. They have no time to pray in their families, because business must be first. They have no strength left to teach in the Sunday school, because business or pleasure must be first. They have no time for the prayer meet-

ing, because business or social matters must be first. The result is easily foreseen. When such people come to be old they are narrowed and cramped and prejudiced in their minds and hearts until they are only poor, dwarfed, and wizened specimens of Christians. Instead of coming to old age with large, generous, spiritual natures, all sails set and every flag flying, and a rich cargo of holy memories to make home-coming glorious, they come in lonely and broken, creeping into port, like some steamer that has used up its coal on the way and had to burn its masts and its cabins to push its poor old hulk into the harbor. Who wants to live and die like that! My friends, the only way to escape it is to obey your divine Lord and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and leave everything else to come in on the secondary list. Spiritual graces first, earthly graces second. What does that mean? It means that you cannot live without a sweet spirit and a kind heart and a patient soul and a gentle, forgiving disposition; but you can get along without the new hat or the new house, if necessary. It is good to have both; but the spiritual graces must be first.

Now and then we see a man or a woman who really takes Jesus at his word, to whom the Spirit

is always first and the world second; where the soul must have what it needs and the flesh can go without, if it has to. The deeds of such people seem like miracles to us; but it is only the common miracle of Christianity. It is only living over again the life of Jesus. God help us to do it!

In the last few months a great many rich people have become poor; their fortunes have taken to themselves wings and have flown away. They have found out what men have been finding out in every age, that all earthly treasures are transitory. Amid this world of change and uncertainty and loss, I want to speak to you of two or three treasures, possible to each of us, which are beyond the reach of moth or rust or thief. And I shall not speak of any one treasure that is out of reach of any man or woman or child here.

One of these priceless treasures which we may carry with us forever, and rejoice in in a million years from now as well as to-day, is a knowledge of God's Word and a love for it which comes from the daily study of it, reverently regarding it as a revelation from our heavenly Father. Mr. Hamilton Wright Mabie, in an essay entitled "A Child of Nature," pays this beautiful tribute to the Bible. He is telling the story of a country boy, and says of him:

"So far no book had ever spoken to John Foster. He had seen few volumes, and from one Book he had heard many things, but no phrase had ever crossed the threshold of his mind. In the little bare meetinghouse at the point where the roads crossed, and from which the whole world seemed to spread out, he heard much discussion of this Book, and frequent appeals to it; it seemed to be a Pandora's box, in which there were weapons for use against one's adversaries, remedies for one's illnesses, scourges for one's sins, rewards for one's virtues, and a plan of things which was taken apart and put together again, like a vast and uninteresting puzzle. Sometimes out of all this confusion of sound a word, a sentence, a picture, an incident suddenly came to life, and glowed for a moment, and caught the boy with a thrill so intense that it was pain; and then the fog of an unknown language drifted in, and the glimpse of something human and beautiful vanished. The atmosphere was lifeless, cold, and gray; some vast system of magic, remote, lying far apart from anything he knew or felt. . . .

"One Sunday, while he was still a child, and this mystery perplexed and distressed him, a strange hand opened the Book, and a strange voice read from it. The voice had in it the magic of

feeling and of insight, and as it retold one of those old, familiar stories which hold the mystery of life and are deeper than any sounding of plummet, suddenly the Book came to life, and the walls seemed to dissolve, and with a great rush of fragrance, caught up from fields and woods, Nature swept into the room. If there had been the stir of angels' wings in the place it could not have been holier than it became from that hour; for the harmony once heard was never lost again.

"When the boy went home he carried the Book into the woods, and there it sang to him strange, deep harmonies of the stars, with great shoutings of the seas and music of birds, and all the sweet, familiar melody of the fields; and in this shining world of stars and seas and birds and waving grain, which he knew so well, he saw strange sights of men moving as in great dreams or caught up in great storms and swept like leaves hither and thither; and his heart was heavy with the burden of the mystery of life and sore with its sorrows; and the veil was lifted from his eyes, and he saw men as well as Nature; not with clear sight, but in part with his eyes and in part with his imagination."

And I have seen many such a case where right on from such a youth the boy or girl has gone,

living in the atmosphere of the Book of books, finding in it the strength to do and dare in life's great struggles, finding in it sympathy and comfort in hours of bitter tears and anguish, coming into it as a ship seeks the harbor when chased by the storm. There are places in it which have been like a garden of flowers, sanctified by seasons of great joy and triumph; there are other shrines in the Holy Word that are sacred because they have been visited when the coffin was in the house and the hearse was at the door; scriptures that are like that slope of Mount Horeb where Moses put off his shoes because the earth on which he stood was holy ground. And the owner of that Bible never comes back to these places without feeling the sacred hush in the air and beholding again the bush aflame with fire and listening to the voice of God who spake of old. Are you making this treasure your own? If so, death can never rob you of it, for immortality will only make it richer and more splendid.

Another treasure that can never be stolen is the memory of a good deed, wrought out with a pure motive and a loving purpose to serve God and to be unselfishly kind toward your fellow men. This is a treasure that no one can take away from you. When we look back over life the multitude of

things that appeared treasures at the time are forgotten. A man never likes to think about the time when he got the long end of the bargain, and at the discomfort or sorrow or ruin of another made a lot of money. He never likes to think over that afterward. He may have chuckled over it at the time, with a cruel sort of glee, but long afterward, when he is sick or old, he would give much to forget it. It is a thorn in his pillow then. It has ceased to be a treasure. What are the things men think of as treasures the memory of which is fragrant in the nostrils of old age? Inquire of Jacob when he is down in Egypt and ready to die, and he will tell you that the two things he remembers that he counts worth while are, first, the time when God Almighty appeared to him and he repented of his sin and was forgiven. Think of it, the treasure that he remembers as supreme is full of repentance and self-surrender! But it glows with the divine pardon which has wrought glorious results in the years that have followed. And Jacob will tell you that the second great treasure of his life was the love that came to him when he found Rachel and served seven years for her.

Repentance, love, service—these are the things we remember. A good deed, a kind action, to be

patient when you are tempted to anger, to be forbearing when the stress is otherwise, to walk with patient footstep and forgiving heart and loving service when we are unjustly dealt with, trying to find what Jesus would do and what spirit he would show if he were placed as we are. If we can live in that spirit and with such motives we shall gather as we go along the path of life treasures that never can be stolen.

There is another treasure which cannot be stolen, of which I wish to speak, and that is sincere and pure love and friendship. Here is a realm of treasure where no moth can corrupt and where no thief can break through and steal. Our earthly association with our loved ones is always uncertain and temporary. A good woman took her little boys to the barber shop the other day to have their hair clipped, and she overheard an elderly man, sitting in one of the barber chairs, say to the man who was serving him, with heart-breaking pathos in his voice, "I have had six boys, and have lost them every one." O, the tender chords that vibrate in many of our hearts as we recall such losses! No man ever asks me to go to the funeral of a little child but there comes back to me, like a flash, the sweet and beautiful face of my firstborn son, whose lovely eyes have been

closed to earth for many years. But, thank God, though our earthly association with those whom we hold in the bonds of love and friendship may be at any time terminated, nothing can really take them from us so long as we hold them in mutual love with our divine Saviour. We shall see our loved ones again. God has received them unto himself, but he will not lose them out of his presence, and we shall find them again in the land of eternal life. They are our treasures forever. They sorrow not, for there is no pain in that climate; they weep not, for God has wiped away all tears from their eyes; they hunger not, for they eat and drink at their Lord's table; they sin not, for it is a land of eternal goodness and love. We shall see them again; we shall feast ourselves upon their love; they are treasures that no fluctuations of the stock market can affect. Neither sickness nor death nor loss of any kind can rob us of the blessed fellowship which in our hearts we hold with them now and which we shall hold with them face to face in the blessed days to come.

O my friends, how glorious is the fellowship with Jesus Christ which makes all these treasures real to us! The Bible, what is it but the frame out of which looks the face of Him who was crucified on the cross as my Saviour? Good deeds,

kind actions, service of my fellow men—these gather their beauty and their fragrance from fellowship with Him who went about doing good. Eternal fellowship with loving friends gathers all its sunshine from that divine love and light which falls from the face of Jesus Christ, that which makes heaven the land of eternal light and love. Let us get close to Christ. Let us bring our hearts into perfect touch and pulse-beat with him, and then all our treasures that are worth keeping shall be beyond the power of the world's frost or winter.

"My place is where the breath of God
 Gives throbbing life to me;
 But one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me.
 His grief is mine, I watch with him;
 His place is mine, I rest in him.
 My joy is vain, unless he cares;
 My love is dross, unless he shares.
 But one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me.

"My place is where the breath of God
 Gives throbbing life to me.
 My work is paltry in his sight,
 My aim is high, and to its height
 He builds the temple of the soul.
 My love is great, and to its whole,
 Not what I weakly manifest,
 He sets the goal, and I am blest.
 But one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me.

"My place is where the breath of God
 Gives throbbing life to me.
 And there the pastures green do lie,
 And quiet waters are near by,
 Where he himself abides alway,
 To wash the sin-stains of the way.
 He whispers low and sweet to me,
 The thoughts that wake love's fealty,
 Till one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me.

"My place is where the breath of God
 Gives throbbing life to me.
 There every voice is voice divine,
 And wakes new joy in heart of mine,
 The murmuring stream, the storm-swept sea,
 The poet's song, the wild bird's blee,
 The Emmaus walk along the way,
 That brings Christ near and begs him stay,
 Till one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me.

"My place is where the breath of God
 Gives throbbing life to me.
 My path is there, beside his cross,
 Where conflict dwells and life is lost
 And found in him complete again.
 And there, among my fellow men,
 In healing touch I see his hand,
 On wisdom's page I read his plan.
 All things reveal a Christ to me,
 Through throe of pain—in ecstasy.
 But one pulse beats, as on I plod,
 Between my Lord and me."

XIX

THE PROMISED HOME OF THE SOUL

For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—*2 Corinthians* v, 1.

It is a very graphic and striking illustration which the apostle Paul uses in this text to make clear the relation between a good man or a good woman and the body in which they live. Our human body is compared to a tabernacle, or house, of a temporary, movable kind, which we are to occupy for a while, but which is not to be depended upon for any lengthy sojourn. Such illustrations abound in the Bible. Isaiah says, "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent." It is in harmony with the other words which compare men living in this world to pilgrims and strangers and travelers on the earth, who have here no continuing city.

Paul's idea of the difference between this earthly house of the physical body and the spiritual house into whose possession the good man enters on leaving this world reminds me of that

frontier life which I knew in my childhood on the shores of the Pacific Ocean. A pioneer in those days, after six months' travel with an ox team, tired out, and usually poverty-stricken, found himself in a new and rude world at the beginning of winter. There were no sawmills, no lumber, no nails, nor other materials for building such a house as he had known in the older settled communities from whence he had come. There was nothing left for him to do but to fell the trees and build him a log cabin with its stick and clay chimney and its roof of shakes, held down by logs, to protect himself and his family from the inclemency of the winter. Sometimes he lived for years in this rude, temporary cabin; but as time went on, if he were ambitious and industrious and prosperous, he was always looking forward to the day when he should be able to build him a new house that would be permanent. He recognized the fact that the one he lived in was very temporary. The squirrels would gnaw the chinking out in the summer time, and it had to be patched up every autumn to keep out the cold blast in the winter. The roof would leak, and often a wind would carry parts of it away. It was forever having to be mended, and was always temporary and uncertain, but if you talked with the owner he did not feel badly about

it, for he was looking forward to a new house which should be not only permanent in character, but free from all the deficiencies and weaknesses of the temporary cabin. This is like Paul's idea of the heavenly house. The earthly house is always in danger of being dissolved. We are forever taking medicine to patch up this temporary cabin in which we live, and patch it as best we may we cannot always keep the roof from leaking or the fierce blasts of pain from coming in. And we know that at their best all our efforts are only patchwork, and that one of these days there will come a storm when the entire house in which we have lived, some of us for a good while, will collapse, and we shall have to escape in a hurry. Paul understood all that, that the dissolution was only a question of time, and it was in the light of that fact that his faith shone out so bright and clear as he wrote this text, "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

I am sure it will be comforting for us to have very clearly impressed on our minds the sharp distinction which Saint Paul makes here between the soul and the body. This world in which we live, so adapted to come in from its material side

through all our senses, often deceives us until it is easy to live on from day to day without having it clearly impressed on us that we are anything more than flesh and blood. And there are multitudes of people who seem to be perfectly satisfied so long as they are healthy, have enough to eat and drink, and their strong appetites are not interfered with. So they live on, year after year, as though the body was the main thing, and without taking into account that its importance is only that of a house as compared to the man who owns it and lives in it. While we live in the body it is our duty to take good care of it. We should be good housekeepers, keep the body clean and wholesome and pure. It is our house, and, if we live righteously, the temple of the Holy Ghost, for God will dwell with us there. But where we make the mistake is when we pay more attention to the body than we do to the soul that dwells within. It is possible for a man's soul to be sick as well as his body. The body has no pains so keen as the pangs that the soul knows. There are no diseases of the body that can make a man so miserable as diseases of the soul. And the man who gives attention to the body only and pays no attention to the health and wholesomeness of his soul is preparing pains and sorrows for himself

when he passes out of this temporary house into his eternal habitation. It is wise for us to take care of the body and keep it in as good a condition as we can; but it is of infinitely more importance that we take care of the tenant inside and keep him well and strong and in wholesome condition, that no spiritual disease which shall unfit him for association with the good and pure in the eternal world shall fall upon him. It is a matter of small importance that for a few years the soul is annoyed by a frail and uncomfortable house; but it is a matter of infinite importance if the soul itself becomes degraded and despoiled, so that it is unfit for dwelling in fellowship with God and his angels.

The characteristics of the house in which we shall live in the heavenly world are not stated in detail. Paul says of it that it is "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." I do not for a moment assume to be wiser about the conditions of immortality than the Word of God. There is one thing sure, however, and that is that the teaching of God's Word makes it certain that we are not to be simply ghosts in the other life. We are not disembodied spirits. While we shall not have flesh and blood, subject to decay, we shall have a body far more permanent

and real than the bodies in which we now dwell. Paul makes this very clear in that oft-quoted paragraph in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians, in which he says, when replying to this very question concerning the characteristics of the spiritual life in our future career: "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There

is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

This new body, this "building of God," shall be free from all the imperfections and weaknesses which sin has brought to prey upon our earthly bodies. That house is as eternal as this is temporary. Here we are constantly impressed with the uncertainty of our sojourn in the earthly house; but there there will be no such thing as decay or sickness or pain or sorrow or premonition of death. And what shall be true of ourselves will be true of our friends and those whom we love. The keenest sorrows which any of us ever know in this world come to us through the avenue of our love and friendship for others. While love is the sweetest and noblest gift that God can bestow upon us, it is also the cause of our keenest pains and sorrows. The sufferings of our friends when we are unable to relieve them, the pains and misfortunes that come to them, and our separations from them, bring to us much of the real sorrow known in this world. But when we shall dwell in the

spiritual body, and shall be at home in the building of God in our immortal life, all these causes of sorrow will be removed. Our friends will dwell in homes as beautiful and as permanent as our own; happiness and love will look from eye to eye, and all the round of the service of heaven will be glad and rejoicing and eternal.

This immortality, which is the supreme hope of mankind, centers in Jesus Christ. Christ has assured us that he came to bring life and immortality to light. He clearly stated that he had power to take up his life and power to lay it down again. He laid down his earthly life upon the cross as an atonement for the sins of the world. And he declared to his disciples that he did this freely and lovingly of his own accord. And before he went away from them he gave them the most tender and loving assurances concerning their own immortality. He said to them: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

And after this he delivered himself up without

a struggle to the soldiers that followed Judas to his arrest. He stood before Pilate dumb like a lamb before its shearers. He wore the crown of thorns in meek submission. He hung upon the cross with tender prayers upon his lips for his enemies and for his murderers. He spoke pardon to the repenting thief who hung on the cross by his side and said to him, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." They took his body and laid it in the tomb of Joseph in the garden. They rolled a great stone to the mouth of the sepulcher, and Pilate to please the chief priests put the seal of the Roman government on the tomb and left a detachment of veteran soldiers to keep the dead man in his grave; which they did without trouble until the promised morning arrived. Then the angel descended from heaven with a face shining like lightning, and those stout soldiers, veterans of many wars, fell like dead men on every side. The angel broke the seal, rolled back the stone from the sepulcher, and Christ came forth from the grave in mighty power. During the next forty days he appeared to Mary, to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, to Peter, to the disciples all gathered together, to a fishing party beside the lake, and at one time to more than five hundred people. He held communion with these earliest Christians

and spoke words which filled them with courage and that have been an inspiration in the Christian church ever since. And then he led them out to Bethany, bade them farewell, and ascended before their eyes, while angels came in his stead to comfort their hearts.

A little while after the ascension of Jesus, Stephen, the first Christian martyr, as they were stoning the life out of him, fell on his knees, and looking upward, with a face that shone like that of an angel, declared that he saw Jesus at the right hand of God, and commended his soul to his keeping. What mattered it though the mob had his body, the poor earthly house which they had battered to pieces; his soul was with Jesus, his Saviour and his Lord.

Dear friends, it is to this blessed immortality we are called. Let us live worthy of it, developing through all the experiences of our human life such a beauty and nobility of spiritual character that when the earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved, Christ our Lord shall welcome us into "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

XX

THE PROMISED RESERVOIR

O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.—*Psalm xxxi*, 19.

THIS theme came to me one day up in the New Hampshire mountains. I had been driving for a long time beside a brook. It was not a large stream, but very beautiful. Here and there the water leaped over great boulders in a dazzling white waterfall; now and again it hid in dark, deep pools, and then it would spread out and run over the shallows, a sheet of water so thin a robin could light in it and scarcely wet his knees. Sometimes the rocks were stepping-stones, over which I saw a chipmunk jump from one to another till he reached the farther shore.

It was a pretty stream, and ever and anon some beautiful picture of swirling water awoke the instincts of the trout fisherman in me, but not once had I thought of the stream as of large commercial value. It seemed too small to turn great wheels or drive huge saws in manufacture. But suddenly I turned around the corner of a hill, and there

before me lay a long sheet of still water, and I exclaimed to my friend, "Ho, our brook has a milldam!" And sure enough, at a place where naturally there had been a waterfall of twenty feet or more, a huge dam had been thrown across from one side of the mountain bluff to the other, and an enormous reservoir of water had been secured. Here was a great mill, and though the little stream would not have furnished much power if used as it came day by day, when stored up and laid by to be used at will it furnished all the power necessary to cut millions of feet of lumber. It was that lumberman's reserve power. For dry days and times of drouth he had the backing of that great milldam. Though it rained not for a month, what did it matter, since his reserve force was sufficient to carry him over till the showers came again.

The more I thought of the miller and his wisdom in dealing with the brook, the more the sermon in all of it dawned upon me. I said to myself that life was like that. Much depends on the reserve force. No man can do his best if he is using up, every day, the last vestige of strength there is in him. We must have a little reserve to draw on. Every business man knows that he cannot work well in business affairs if he has to draw

out all his bank account every day. So in neither body nor mind nor soul can we be at our best without some reserve force.

The whole modern idea of occasional vacations from work is built on this philosophy. The idea is that by rest from the regular work of our lives it is possible to store up physical energy and nervous power, so that a man in ten months will do more and better work because of the great milldam of laid-away strength and force which he has gathered than he would in twelve with the unaided power of the natural current of his life.

I understand that this theme will not appeal very strongly to those who do not take life seriously and earnestly. There are many people to whom life is always a trout stream and nothing more. To eat, to drink, and be merry, to find if possible a good time, is all it means to them. Such people see no need of a milldam that shall store up power to turn the wheel that drives the sharp saw through the great logs of difficulty, creating the lumber which makes for progress and civilization. But men and women who live earnestly know that life is serious even when it is most glad. Dr. J. R. Miller tells about a traveler who tarried several days at Antwerp, and noted with interest the effect which the bells in the great cathedral tower

had upon him. Every quarter-hour they rang out on the air their sweet notes, in soft melody, which fell like a delicious rain of music dropping from the heavens, as tender and as holy as the songs of angels. Then, at the full hour, amid their shower of liquid notes of silver, there rang out the solemn strokes of the great bell, with iron tongue, deep and heavy; and these heavy tones filled him with a feeling of awe. As he listened, hour after hour, to the chimes, the tender melody of the smaller, sweeter bells reminded him of the mercy and love of God, and the solemn undertones that broke on his ear at the end of each full hour spoke of the awful themes of justice, judgment, and eternity.

God has organized the world on this theory of reserve force. Springtime and summer and autumn are intended to fill granaries and cellars and barns and storehouses with reserves to be drawn upon in the winter. And so happy days that are prosperous, days of strength and vigor, times of joy and victory, ought to be times when we store up faith and courage to meet the darker days of trial and difficulty. One of the most beautiful things, as illustrating this thought, which I have ever seen is in a little prayer of Robert Louis Stevenson, in which he says: "We thank thee, Lord, for the glory of the late days and the ex-

cellent face of thy sun. We thank thee for good news received. We thank thee for the pleasures we have enjoyed, and for those we have been able to confer. And now, when the clouds gather, and the rain impends over our forest and our home, permit us not to be cast down. Let us not lose the savor of past mercies and past pleasures; but, like the voice of a bird singing in the rain, let grateful memories survive in the hour of darkness. If there be in front of us any painful duty, strengthen us with the grace of courage; if any act of mercy, teach us tenderness and patience." I am sure that the secret of happiness and true comfort lies in the spirit of that prayer. If we thus live, we shall always have a storehouse of sweet memories that will give us courage and forbearance and patience when we most need them.

The whole theory of education is built on this plan. We educate a boy or a girl not only that we may develop and discipline the mind, but that each may start out in the world with a certain reservoir of intellectual power which may be drawn upon for service and with a knowledge of the art of gathering other force and storing it up against the day of need. The truly educated man is the man of resources. He is powerful because he has much reserve force.

Daniel Webster once told a good story in a speech, and was asked where he got it. He replied, "I had it laid up in my head for fourteen years, and never got a chance to use it until to-day." A man said to me not long ago, "When I was a little boy my mother used to insist on my committing to memory verses of Scripture. Sometimes I enjoyed it, and sometimes I did not. There were times when it was a great bore to me, and I could not see any good that could ever come from it. But she was inexorable, and the result was that I committed to memory, at a time when my memory was very tenacious, many of the great Scripture promises. Well, last year, I had a great trial. For days and weeks unexpected sorrows came upon me until I thought of Job and of the troubles that came in upon him like a flood. And in that time of sorrow and trouble I thanked God over and over again for the wisdom of my mother, long since in heaven, who had compelled me to store my mind with the rich promises of God's Word. When I needed them, there they were stored away for that very hour. We all need to store up Scripture knowledge to be drawn upon in the day of need. It is said of a certain railroad engineer who has to go to work at three o'clock in the morning that he feels so keenly the need of

the study of the Bible that he rises every day at two o'clock, in order that he may spend an hour in Bible reading and prayerful devotion. Such a man goes forth to his day's work with a reserve of spiritual force which causes his life to bound forth with courage and good cheer.

Great reserves give great enthusiasm to life. The water goes dashing down the millrace when there is a huge milldam behind it because all the reserve force back of it is pushing it onward, and he who lives in communion with God day by day may go to his work in that spirit.

Franz Joseph Haydn was a most cheerful Christian. When an old man he said with emphasis, "When I think of my God, my heart dances within me for joy, and then my music has to dance too."

Emperor Franz once asked him which of his two oratorios he preferred.

"The Creation!"

"Why?"

"Because in the Creation angels speak, and their talk is of God."

In composing, when he felt the ardor of his imagination decline, he rose from his work and resorted to prayer—an expedient which, he used to say, never failed to revive him. "I was," he

declared, "never so pious as during the time when I worked on the Creation. Daily I fell on my knees and begged God to vouchsafe to me strength for the fortunate outcome of the work."

Many lives fail of power and usefulness because there is laid up behind them no reserve force of confidence and faith which alone can give that composure of spirit, that contentment of heart, which make a life strong and true. Better than wealth, better than any business success, is the hidden reservoir of confidence in God and assurance of harmony with him that vouchsafes to us a brave spirit for the work of every day before us.

The story is told of a Scottish nobleman who, seeing an old gardener of his establishment with a somewhat threadbare coat, made a rather discrediting remark on its condition. "It is a verra gude coat," said the honest old man. "I cannot agree with you there," said his lordship. "Ay, it is a verra gude coat," persisted the old man; "it covers a contented spirit, and that is mair than mony a man can say of his coat."

It is out of such a spirit that Henry van Dyke has written his little poem about life, voicing the wish of his own soul, and I am sure the wish of many of us:

"Let me but live my life from year to year
With forward face and unreluctant soul,
Not hastening to nor turning from the goal;

"Not mourning for the things that disappear
In the dim past, nor holding back in fear
From what the future veils; but with a whole
And happy heart, that pays its toll
To Youth and Age, and travels on with cheer.

"So let the way wind up the hill or down,
Though rough or smooth, the journey will be joy;
Still seeking what I sought when but a boy,
New friendship, high adventure, and a crown,
I shall grow old, but never lose life's zest,
Because the road's last turn will be the best."

To live life at its strongest and best we must have the Christian's reservoir of hope and strength which will give us confidence not only for the presence and good will of God during our earthly lives, but will assure us of the divine presence and support in the hour of death and in the great future toward which we hasten. Paul, writing to the Colossians, thanks God most of all for "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel." Writing about his own outlook on the future, he says to Timothy, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that

day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." No man can live the strong, splendid life which is possible for him without the great reserve force of a faith in immortality and the confident hope of its enjoyment.

The eloquent Senator Hoar of Massachusetts not long ago delivered a eulogy on Robert Burns before an audience of Scotchmen, in which he said that the whole secret of Scottish history and of New England history, also, was to be found in that portion of the Cotter's Saturday Night where Burns pictures the family worshipping its Maker, and he added: "No race or nation will ever be great, or will long maintain greatness, unless it holds fast to the faith in a living God, in a beneficent providence, and in a personal immortality. To man, as to nation, every gift of noblest origin is breathed upon by Hope's perpetual breath."

My brother, take care lest the old thought about heaven and immortality and the sweet faith in God and in his providence in which you were reared shall be lost out of your heart and life, and your life lose its greatest force and power for lack of that immeasurable reservoir of strength. Sometimes up in the mountains the little crawfish dig through the solid embankment, perforating it in every direction with little passageways that seem

insignificant, but which after a time weaken the whole dam until it gives way, and the treasures of water that were stored up to drive the wheels of the mill run to waste and are lost. Is it not true that in this great city the devil's crawfish undermine many a man's hope of heaven? Is it not possible that I speak now to some soul conscious of the gnawing claws which are eating out the very heart of the most sacred hopes and faiths, so that the force which once held you to goodness is being wasted? If so, I call you now to be on your guard and to awake ere it is too late to see your danger. For such a loss is beyond measure in its terrible result.

On the other hand, if like David we live with our hearts full of the consciousness of the goodness of God which is laid up for them that trust him, we shall face the future with courage, knowing that all will be well at the last. We have much work we want to do; there is much we would like to change before we die; but if our hope and faith take in the great promise of God, that all things work together for good to them that love him, we shall do our day's work at full strength and leave the result to him without worry.

A young Scotch girl who had been living for some years in this country fell ill, and, knowing

that her sickness was unto death, begged to be taken back to her native land. On the homeward voyage she kept repeating over and over the sentence, "O for a glimpse o' the hills o' Scotland!" Before the voyage was half over it was evident to those who were caring for her that she could not live to see her native land. One evening, just at sunset, they brought her on deck. The west was all aglow with glory, and for a few minutes she seemed to enjoy the scene. Some one said to her, "Is it not beautiful?" She answered, "Yes, but I'd rather see the hills o' Scotland." For a little while she closed her eyes, and then, opening them again, and with a look of unspeakable gladness on her face, she exclaimed, "I see them noo, and aye they're bonnie." Then, with a surprised look, she added, "I never kenned before that it was the hills o' Scotland where the prophet saw the horsemen and the chariots, but I see them all, and we are almost there." Then, closing her eyes, she was soon at home. The friends who stood about her knew that it was not the hills of Scotland, but the hills of glory that she saw. So we all have our mountains of ambition; we have the hills of achievement toward which we look with longing eyes; but we shall not worry if the hilltops of the country of the King intervene ere we reach them.

It is a terrible thing to come to the end of life bankrupt, with the stream of life dried up, with all its water wasted; but it a glorious thing to come toward the end with the reservoir full, with every wheel turning and every saw cutting its meed of service for God and humanity. My friends, there is no good thing in forgiveness, in redemption, in comfort, in everlasting hope, that God has laid up for any soul which may not be yours if you will consecrate to him your heart and your service.

XXI

THE PROMISE OF SATISFACTION

I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.—
Psalms xvii, 15.

THIS psalm is the cry of a man beset by difficulties on every side. It is a prayer of David poured forth from a full heart, in which he pleads with God for help and for defense against cruel enemies who are bent upon taking away his life. David had deserved only good of Saul and of the nation. His life had been simple; his deeds had been heroic; his heart had been as open and frank as the sunshine; and yet Saul's envy and hatred and malice had driven him from his wife and children, and he was hunted like a wild beast through the wilderness. The greatness of the man's character comes out in these psalms that were written under such circumstances. The hills and the forests through which he was passing from day to day are drawn upon in the psalms as illustrations to make known his spiritual needs. Speaking of his purpose to do right under all circumstances, David says, "By the word of thy lips I

have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not." There were no roads in the wilderness; the hills were rugged; there were only trails here and there, and in many places a man must be careful not to slip and fall over a precipice. All that to David was an illustration of the spiritual danger, and he prays God that he may not fall on the heavenly trail. Other illustrations abound. As he had crowded through the thicket during the day a gnat or a speck of dust had fallen into his eye, and the delicate, sensitive apple of the eye had retained his attention. Later on he had seen the mother eagle hovering over her nest on a mountain crag. And when at night he came to write this psalm he prayed, "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings."

A man so beset, feeling all the stings of poverty and the loneliness of exile, is tempted constantly to envy those who are rich and strong and have seemingly nothing to disturb their pleasure. And so he recalls some rich men of the world, whom he knows, who do not care much for God or his church, but whose stout boxes are full of treasure and whose paths seem to run smoothly; while, on the other hand, David has nothing to comfort him

except the consolation of knowing that he is doing right and that God is pleased with him. Yet he closes his psalm in perfect confidence, content even to die in exile if he but awake in the likeness of his God, feeling that in that he shall be perfectly satisfied. After picturing all the glories of men who are depending entirely upon worldly things for their happiness, and reflecting how temporary and unsatisfactory such happiness must be, he turns to his spiritual joy, and says, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

This figure is peculiarly comforting to us as Christians, because practically the same figure is used in the New Testament in promise that we shall become like the Lord Jesus Christ. John, the beloved disciple, in his first epistle says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Now I take it that these two scriptures ought to teach us the same lesson. David had no hope of seeing the face of God except in righteousness. Meditating on God's perfections, trusting in his

goodness, seeking day by day to be guided and held by the divine hand, he had content, and rested in the hope of perfect satisfaction when at last he should awake in the likeness of God. According to Saint John, every Christian is now the son of God and as a son is growing in the knowledge and likeness of his heavenly Father. Having this divine hope in his heart, he purifies himself from wicked things and struggles to live worthy of his high destiny until he shall awake at last in the spotless likeness of his divine Lord.

The story is told of a young prince who was stolen away in childhood from his father's palace and brought up in the midst of unworthy surroundings. After many years he was recovered and brought back. By degrees he came to understand his position. He did not quite understand it at first, and he was full of gratitude when he contrasted what he was with what he had been. Yet he had many difficulties. The habits of years of depraved life were not easily shaken off. But he contended manfully against the difficulties and climbed up slowly and surely to a fitness for the position into which he had been so happily reinstated. Two considerations influenced this young man. First, he desired to act worthily of his princely state; and then, because he knew he was

to inherit his father's scepter and rule over large populations, he desired to qualify himself for the task and responsibility of ruling.

This little story illustrates our situation as Christians. We are now the sons of God. Many of us have been carried away by wicked sins, but we have been rescued and brought back and are learning our duties as princes in the royal family of heaven. It is our privilege, it is our duty, to live every day in a way worthy of the children of God, and we are to look forward to the day when our immortality in honor and glory is to begin in fellowship with our divine Lord, and to the full realization of the promise that when we shall look in his face we shall see that we are like him and we shall be satisfied.

We are now in the midst of the struggle to become like Jesus. God help us that we do not lose sight of the fact that that is the greatest possible ambition which our minds and hearts can now hold. At the beginning all we can do is to trust, to rest upon God by faith. A father who had one little child, in whom his very soul was bound up, was shocked not long ago to be told by the physician that his boy must undergo a serious surgical operation. It required all the moral strength the man had to lay the little fellow upon

the operating table with his own hands. Four surgeons stood around the boyish form. While the father held the little palm they administered the anæsthetic, and while every nerve in that father's body was quivering with the agony of suppressed feeling the brave little lad whispered, as he felt unconsciousness stealing over him, "It's all right, fader." No wonder the surgeons had to dash something from their eyes before they could see their knives. Dear friends, we are the children of God. In the hour when we cannot understand, and when we see but vaguely and dimly, we must tighten our hold upon God, and say, "It is all right, Father."

I used to live near the Perkins Institution for the Blind, in South Boston, while Helen Keller was receiving her first instruction there. Blind, deaf, and dumb, she was struggling out to the light along the single nerve of sensation. Her only possible hope was in the confidence and faith of others. One day her teacher told Helen Keller, through her fingers, that there was a nerve in the ear for hearing, but that something had deadened her nerve in infancy. That, though all seemed silent to her, yet there were soldiers marching through the streets, keeping step to the sound of martial music. And Helen trustingly answered,

"I understand, and I believe." One day the teacher asked Phillips Brooks to tell the little blind girl about God, and interpreting through the fingers of her teacher, the great preacher told her that God was very near to her; that he loved her, and would never let go of her hand, either in life or in death. And the trusting child answered, "I have often felt him. He comes like warmth. But I did not know before what to call him." And so Helen Keller entered into the great joy of faith in God and struggling to be like him.

David sought to become like God by meditating upon him and holding himself to righteousness in the divine strength. John sets before us the same great ideal. He points our faces toward Jesus, and declares that the climax of human life shall come when we shall see him as he is. We get a glimpse of him at conversion, and we see him with more or less clearness all the way along as we trust him and love him and try to serve him. I was once trying to lead a young blind man to Christ. He was a very intelligent young fellow; had been brought up in a Christian home, and was very willing to become a Christian. But he told me that his mind was confused and he did not know just how to take hold upon Christ. He did not discern the way. I said, "Let us kneel down

and pray, and ask Jesus about it. I am sure that he will show us the way if we ask him in faith." So we knelt down, side by side, and after I had prayed I asked him to pray, and in a few boyish sentences, with the simplicity of childhood, he prayed; but the prayer was broken into by his suddenly exclaiming, "I see! I see! It is all clear now!" The blind man had seen "the King in his beauty." Yet all revelation of Jesus here is as nothing to the glory of that vision which shall be ours when we shall awake at last in his likeness.

I have a great desire this morning that every one of us shall catch inspiration from our study of this blessed promise to quicken us in our ambitions to grow into the likeness of Christ.

Dr. Joseph Parker, who has so recently entered into that world of perfect vision, comments with characteristic vigor on the old philosophical theory that a man is turned into what he looks upon lovingly—that is to say, there were philosophers who would contend strenuously that if we looked at beauty we should become beautiful; if we looked at hideousness we should become debased by the sight. The great London preacher avowed that there is an element of truth in that theory; and that element of truth finds its culmination, its glorification, in this very doctrine of seeing God

and being transformed by the sight into the same image. But we must not forget that there must be responsiveness, sympathy; there must be real love of the object that is gazed upon, or no such transformation will ever begin. You may so handle a flower as to do it merely for the sake of getting wages; then the flowers work no change in your face; they do not help your wrinkles into furrows for the reception of the seed of heaven. You must love your art, and you will be affected by it. Love your flowers, and you will become beautiful, if not in form, yet in spirit and aspiration and longing for the heavenly. So if we love our Bibles, if we gaze upon the face of Jesus Christ with reverent and tender desire, we shall become beautiful in spirit, in thought, in chastened feeling, and even the most destructive storms of trial that sweep across our lives will contribute to the growth of spiritual beauty in us if we are devoted to this great ambition of becoming like Jesus.

There has been a strange revelation in the eruption of Mont Pelée. It has been found that in volcanic ashes there is an unheard-of fertilizer. It is said that in Saint Vincent, wherever the dust has fallen, the flowers are beginning to bloom with a luxuriance and a glory never dreamed of before. So it is often true in our lives that the

likeness of Jesus in us develops with greatest rapidity when the volcanic ashes of some great sorrow or disappointment have fallen over us. This reminds me of that great host which John saw in his vision of heaven, a host that were so glorious beyond all others that he inquired of his heavenly visitant who they were, and the response was, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Surely it were wise to welcome sorrow, to be patient under grief, to bear disappointments with fortitude, if these may be God's angels to develop in us the likeness to Jesus Christ which shall at last fill us with perfect satisfaction.

Our text has a very beautiful suggestion of the naturalness of death. It is simply a going to sleep, and to the good man with assurance of an awakening in a realm of perfect satisfaction, where he shall find himself in sweetest harmony with that land, seeing that he himself is in the perfect likeness of the King. Sir Edwin Arnold, in his *Light of Asia*, translates a little Persian story into a poem which helpfully suggests how little death means to the triumph of the soul. Abdallah is represented as speaking about his own body after he is dead, and he says:

"Faithful friends, it lies, I know,
 Pale and white, and cold as snow;
 And ye say, 'Abdallah's dead,'
 Weeping at the feet and head.
 I can see your falling tears,
 I can hear your sighs and prayers;
 Yet I smile and whisper this:
 'I am not the thing you kiss!
 Cease your tears and let it lie;
 It *was* mine—it is not I.'

"Sweet friends, what the women lave
 For the last sleep of the grave
 Is the hut that I am quitting,
 Is the garment no more fitting,
 Is the cage from which at last,
 Like a bird, my soul has passed.
 Love the inmate, not the room;
 The wearer, not the garb—the plume
 Of the eagle, not the bars
 That keep him from the splendid stars.

"Loving friends, O rise and dry
 Straightway every weeping eye;
 What ye lift upon the bier
 Is not worth one single tear.
 'Tis an empty seashell—one
 Out of which the pearl is gone.
 The shell is broken, it lies there;
 The pearl, the *all*, the *soul* is here."

God grant that in the day when we arise we may
 not be homeless nor exiled, but may say with
 David, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with
 thy likeness."

XXII

THE PROMISE OF GRACE TO BEAR THE THORN

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. —2 *Corinthians* xii, 7-9.

WHAT was this thorn in the flesh which cut Paul to the quick and kept him humble? I do not know. For reasons satisfactory to himself Paul did not tell us. Perhaps it was some little thing that men would only have laughed at if he had told them, and yet something which, like the sting of a mosquito, was so poisonous and annoying that no words could express properly its provoking properties. Paul had had great honor and blessing from God. He had been taken up into the "third heaven" in his Christian experience. He had beheld things unutterable. He was lifted up, exalted, glorified. And his great danger and temptation, as a result, was spiritual pride. Then, lest

he be exalted overmuch, God sent him the thorn in the flesh to remind him of his frailty, of his weakness, of his utter and helpless dependence upon God. And it is the glory of Paul's career that in that humiliating experience he turned to God to seek relief.

Now, Paul was not alone in this experience of the thorn in the flesh. It would seem that God balances our gifts, and if he bestows a great blessing upon us in any way he seeks by some thorn in the flesh to save us from vanity and pride and hold us to faithful devotion to the work for which we were created. It does not always succeed, for even God will not override the human will. Sometimes a man refuses to see God's mercy in the thorn in the flesh, but hardens his heart, and grits his teeth, and shakes his fist in the face of his Creator. Then the thorn in the flesh only adds to his misery. If you want to see a contrast such as that, take those two brilliant Englishmen, Lord Byron and John Wesley. Lord Byron was one of the most brilliant of the Englishmen of his day. Few men in the history of the world have had a rarer or nobler poetic gift than was given to Byron. But Byron had a clubfoot, and that clubfoot was his thorn in the flesh. If he had been reverent and pure and devout, he would have been one of

the world's greatest geniuses through all time, and his infirmity would have but sweetened his nature and would have added a note of tenderness and sympathy to the world's anthem of praise. But turning from God, poisoned and bitter against God on account of his weakness, it brought him misery and disaster.

Turn from the brilliant poet to the no less brilliant evangelist and reformer, John Wesley. Wesley's thorn in the flesh was a jealous, scolding, malignant wife, a woman hard to match in the history of civilization for cruelty and venom, a woman who spit in his face, who pulled his hair out by the roots, who lied about him in private and libeled him in public, and about whom the poet Southey said that she tormented him in such a manner by her outrageous jealousy and abominable temper that she deserved to be classed in a triad with Xanthippe and the wife of Job as one of the three bad wives. John Wesley had her for wife for twenty years, and all those twenty years grew in grace and in fame and in usefulness, putting his shoulders the farther under the world's needs and making himself every year a greater blessing to humanity. What effect the thorn in the flesh shall have depends on how we take it and on our relation to God.

The message of our text is of far higher value to us from the very fact that the special thorn in the flesh from which Paul suffered is not made known to us. As another has said, the attempt to determine the exact measure of Paul's trial is like the attempt to ascertain the species of the lily Christ alluded to in the Sermon on the Mount. It might be interesting to the botanist to have a scientific determination of the plant, but the lesson of trust in Providence can be learned equally as well from the daisy, or the buttercup, or the violet. So in this case. The discipline which came to Paul through his thorn in the flesh may come to every one in this audience through the suffering of some different ill or sorrow, if it is borne in the same spirit and with the same reverent attitude toward God. Paul was in danger of spiritual pride. Religious ecstasy is a gift rather than an acquirement, and those whose temperament leads to it are likely to be tempted to plume themselves on this account on a supposed superiority to their fellow Christians. As Paul could soar, while others had to remain on the level, he might be tempted to underestimate them and to overestimate himself. Whenever such feelings arose there was the sharp pang of the thorn to recall him to himself and remind him that he shared the infirmities

of ordinary mortals. An excessive valuation of self is brought down by repeated failures in life which remind us how narrow are the limits of human power. I am sure there is no one listening to me who has not had some experience on this line. You have had some great success. Everything has seemed to be going your way. You have said to yourself as others have failed and gone down, "My mountain standeth fast." And just then, when you were beginning to be swelled up and puffed beyond measure in your own opinion, there came a sharp twinge of pain from an unexpected point. It may have been your own health; you had been well and strong, did not know you had a stomach or a liver or a heart, they did their work so easily; but all at once you became painfully and most humiliatingly conscious of one or more of these organs. You began to be anxious about your health. When you read in the Bible God's message to Hezekiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," it came home to you with a wonderfully new meaning. If, under that touch of the thorn, you became humble and prayerful and trustful toward God and kinder to your neighbors, then the thorn fulfilled its mission. But if you stiffened yourself against it, and became bitter and cross and less

devout, then it is failing and may finally fail of its divine mission to your soul.

The great secret of Paul's triumphant career was his reverence toward God. At first he did not understand the purpose of this thorn in the flesh. It annoyed him beyond measure, and he besought God that he might be rid of it. He tells us that three times he most earnestly pleaded with God to take it away from him, and then God answered his prayer not by taking away the thorn in the flesh—God saw that that was necessary for Paul all the way through; but he told Paul that while it remained with him his grace would be sufficient for him.

Paul lived in such sensitive fellowship with God that he was constantly receiving impressions from the Holy Spirit. Strange that anyone should doubt God's power to thus speak to his children!

Only the other day a coach dog became lost from his master, and the poor dog hunted everywhere for him, up and down many streets, in great misery. At last he was found by one of his master's friends, who went to his office and asked by telephone if the gentleman had lost his dog.

"Yes; where is he?" was the reply.

"He is here. Suppose you call him through the telephone."

The dog's ear was placed over the ear-piece, and his master said: "Jack! Jack! Jack! How are you, Jack?" Jack instantly recognized the voice, and began to yelp. He licked the telephone fondly, seeming to think that his master was inside the casing. At the other end of the line the gentleman recognized the familiar barks, and shortly afterward he reached his friend's office to claim his property.

Strange, is it not, that men who will accept without question the fact that a master may call his dog across miles of space through the telephone have been caught in a maze of doubt at the power of Almighty God, the Creator of the universe, to speak to the hearts of his children? But Paul knew, what every one in the world knows who reverently and with childlike faith approaches God from day to day, that God does speak to those who love him and trust him. If you would learn the secret of the sorrows and trials of life, you must live in this tender and childlike communion with your heavenly Father.

Paul was convinced that the thorn in the flesh would never be taken away. He would carry it with him while he lived. From day to day he would feel its sharp pricking, and he would carry it on until he laid it down at last before "the great

white throne" in heaven. And yet he was content, and more than content, for God promised him grace to bear it; not grace to bear it all at once, but grace to bear it a day at a time, as he went along. There is a little old story of the discontented pendulum. The pendulum began to reflect how often it had swung in the hour, and then, multiplying its strokes by the hours of the day, and these again by the days in the weeks, and these finally by the weeks in the year, it came to see how very often it would have to move backward and forward in one year; and, overwhelmed with the thought, it suddenly stopped. It began to swing again only when reminded that, after all, it was never required to move oftener than once a second, and that it had nothing to do with the future. We all need to learn the lesson of the pendulum. If we go forward trustingly, God will give us grace to bear our thorn in the flesh, whatever it is, by degrees, as we need it.

God's promise will hold good for us as we go forward doing our duty. It is like breathing. A man does not need a whole room full of air for one breath. I have been told that an apparatus has been recently invented for preserving life in mines where there are poisonous gases which up to this time have been fatal to human life. Like

all great inventions, it is a very simple contrivance. The miner carries on his back a knapsack, which contains a supply of pure air. From this a tube is conveyed to the mouth, while the nostrils are closed by a spring. The same vessel is connected with a bright lamp, fastened to the miner's chest. Both the man and his light are perfectly independent of the atmosphere about them, which is full of the deadly fire-damp. The knapsack being connected by a tube with a reservoir of air fed from above, existence and light can be maintained for a long period amid the most deadly gases. So, my brother, it is possible for you, whatever the thorn in the flesh which gives you pain, whatever the poisonous atmosphere in which you may have to toil for your daily bread, to draw the air your soul breathes, and the illumination for your path, from the upper world, while you go bravely forward, digging heavenly gold even in the very midst of the fire-damp of hell itself.

We must come to look at our sorrows and our trials as Paul looked at his if we would live the same victorious life and keep young and fresh and brave to the very last, as he did. This very thorn in the flesh for which Paul had earnestly besought God that it might be taken from him became after a while a thing of rejoicing to him. He says about

it: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Dear friends, we must learn that art—how to get strength out of weakness. Robert Collyer once crossed the Suspension Bridge below Niagara and had an interesting talk with a gentleman about the crystallization of iron. They agreed that every train which crossed the bridge did something to disintegrate the iron particles and break the bridge down, and that if this process should go on long enough there would be a last train which would shoot right down into the gulf. But long before this could come to pass all these strands and cables would be made over again in the fire and under the hammer and come out as strong and good as ever. To take them out and let them lie at rest on the banks by the river would be no sort of use. The ironmaster would say, "That would make the strands eternally unfit for their purpose; the hammer and fire can make them better and stronger than ever." And this is the law of life, that the fineness and strength essential to our best being and to make us do our best work come by the thorn in the flesh, which may act in

us as the fire acts in the iron, welding the fiber afresh and creating the whole anew. So we may comfort ourselves with the thought that in the midst of the trials and burden-bearing of our Christian lives, if we live in faith and fellowship in Christ, there shall be a divine alchemy constantly renewing our strength, so that in weakness we shall be made strong. Neither do we need to fear anything that may come to us in the future. God will not grow old or feeble that he shall forget us, and though we carry our thorn in the flesh with us until our journey is done, his grace shall be sufficient, and in our weakness we shall find strength.

There is a story of a shipwreck which tells how the crew and the passengers had to leave the broken vessel and take to the boats. The sea was rough, and great care in rowing and steering was necessary in order to guard the heavily laden boat, not from the ordinary waves, which they rowed over easily, but from the great cross-seas. Night was approaching, and the hearts of all sank as they asked what they should do in the darkness when they would no longer be able to see these terrible waves. To their great joy, however, when it grew dark they discovered they were in phosphorescent water and that each dangerous wave rolled up

crested with light, which made it as clearly visible as if it were midday.

So it shall be with every trusting heart who faces the future of life's voyage in the spirit which Paul has illustrated to us in this incident which we have studied together. You shall meet no great sorrow that will not carry in itself the light which will take away the peril and the terror. The night of trial comes bearing its own lamp of comfort. The hour of weakness brings with it its precious secret of strength. By the brink of the bitter waters of Marah there grows a tree the branches of which will forever make them sweet. The wilderness may have its times of hunger and drought, but there shall be no morning without its heavenly manna. Your Gethsemane may be dark, but the angels that comforted your Master and whispered messages of love and courage in his ear shall minister to you and bring you home in peace.

XXIII

THE PROMISED GUARDIANSHIP OF THE SOUL

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—*Philippians* iv, 7.

WHEN Christ was bidding farewell to his disciples the sweetest word he could say to those dearest friends was, "My peace I leave with you." And the Saviour supplements that statement with the declaration that he does not bestow it as the world does. It was not a worldly gift, and it was not of the ephemeral and transient sort, which is the only kind of gifts the world has power to bestow upon us.

The promise is exceedingly interesting to us because every human soul comes very soon on life's journey to feel the need of a guard, of some one to keep him from falling and to keep him from anxiety and fear. There could be no other guard so splendid as the peace of God, for peace means banishment of fear and the absence of anxious care.

Let us notice the character of this peace which alone can keep guard over the soul. It is the peace

of God. That means that its foundation is in absolute honesty and sincerity. There is no deceit with God. If we have the peace of God nothing can disturb it, because there is no hidden deception which, if brought to light, could shame us for a moment. The man who sets out to be kept by the peace of God has given himself completely to the right at whatever cost. Multitudes of people there are who banish all possibilities of peace because their lives are a network of deceptions and falsities.

A Christian man riding in a train the other day had behind him a mother and a boy, a very promising little fellow. The conductor had punched the mother's ticket; and, as a ticket had not been provided for the boy, the conductor, looking at the boy, politely said, "Is your boy under five, madam?"

"Yes," was the prompt reply.

The conductor moved on, and the youngster said to his mother, "Why, mamma, I'm past six."

Instantly, with frowning face, and a countenance blazing with wrath, the mother said: "Don't you ever contradict me again. I know what I'm saying. If the conductor had heard you say that he would have made me pay half fare for you. Don't ever say again on a train that you are past six. If you do, I'll whip you when you get home."

The boy was still and thoughtful for a moment. Then the gentleman heard him say, in a remonstrative tone, "But, mamma, I *am* past six."

A slap followed; the child cried; the mother looked like a tempest; and the man who overheard it fairly boiled with indignation.

Mr. John Willis Baer, who had overheard this conversation, summed it up that a railroad accident which had crippled this boy physically for life would probably not have done him so much harm as that incident. But think of the mother. She lied to the conductor; she lied to her own boy; she cheated the railroad; she abused her child. The tempest of anger into which she was thrown revealed the immediate result of it all in her own inner nature. Naturally peace was impossible to her, for true peace, the peace of God, is born of a clean conscience and an open mind to do the right.

There are some glorious characteristics about this keeping power of the peace of God. It is able to keep the heart joyous in the midst of every untoward circumstance. Many of you know that Mr. Ira D. Sankey, whose fame filled all the world for many years during his association with Mr. Moody in evangelistic work, has become hopelessly blind. He has to be led about like a little child.

If you recall the big, square-shouldered, strong, active man Mr. Sankey was, you can imagine something of what that must mean to him. But a friend who saw him recently says that his old cheery spirit is still with him, and Mr. Sankey lately said: "Don't let my friends worry about me; all is well with me, and the road is bright." The peace of God is on guard at the door of his heart. In a situation which would drive many men to suicide and which would overwhelm others with constant gloom and depression he lives a life of reverent gratitude toward God and loving fellowship with all who meet him.

There is another characteristic of this guard of the soul, and that is that worldly surroundings, such as riches or poverty, have absolutely nothing to do with it.

A certain lady who belonged to a noble family in Europe suddenly lost her husband by death, leaving her in the deepest depression. The world lost its charm; the pleasures of society, which had been very delightful to her before, now only disgusted her. Her life was utterly without zest and hope. One day a shoemaker came to call upon her in the pursuit of his trade, and she observed that he wore a countenance more serene and peaceful than any she had ever seen. The glory that beamed

from this humble cobbler's face threw her own unhappy soul into still deeper shadows. She asked him if he was happy. His simple answer was, "I am the happiest of men."

After the shoemaker had finished his work and gone away the light of his countenance lingered with her, and she sent for him to come again and tell her the secret of his happy life. In simple, honest language he told her the story of how he had been led to Christ, how his sins had been forgiven, his conscience set at rest, and of the love of God that filled his heart with perfect contentment and peace. This life won her out of all her darkness and gloom to trust Christ and find the same peace of God which had made the poor shoemaker so happy.

I was reading recently the account of a patriotic meeting in which the speakers one after another had eulogized a number of great popular heroes. At last a man rose to speak whose work often led him into the poorest homes of the city.

"The other day," he said, "I went to see one of our people who was in trouble. Her husband was a drunkard, and now her only son had fallen ill, and there was but her tired, worn-out hands for the double burden.

"How do you get along?"

“‘O,’ she replied, ‘I take in washing. I’ve taken in washing for thirty years.’

“‘Don’t you ever get tired of it?’

“She looked at me simply. ‘O, that’s all right,’ she answered; ‘if the Lord wants me to spend my life over the tubs, I’m willing.’”

The speaker said he thought of that life—of its thirty years of thankless, unremitting toil, of the years still before her, bare of love or ease or pleasure, and he went home with a great lesson. None of the national heroes, great as they were, worthy of the highest honors that we can give them, ever seemed to him more splendid than the poor, unlettered woman standing so heroically in her hard place and willing to stand there until the end.

Now, what made that woman the hero she was? What gave her that power of heroism? It was the guard she had at her soul’s door. She had none of this world’s peace, but the peace of God kept guard over her heart and mind.

This peace is the supreme mark of Christian character. Every other mark is superficial. Forms and ceremonies, however solemn and splendid they may be, cannot prove to us that any man or woman is a Christian. The character itself must prove that if it is proved at all.

Cyrus Townsend Brady, the home missionary author, tells us that he once baptized a little girl in a small town on the border of Indian Territory. Her father was a cattle man, the owner of enormous herds. Throughout the great West each cattle owner has a brand of his own for marking his animals, and the mavericks—for that is what they call young cattle born on the range—belong to the man who can get his branding iron on them first.

This little girl had to remain away one day from the public school for her baptism. When she returned the children set upon her with hard questions, and inquired skeptically how she was in any way different from what she had been before. She told them, using the language which had been spoken to her, that she had been made "A member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Still they gathered about her, and with the unconscious cruelty of children baited her with puzzling queries. Finally, when she had exhausted all other means, she turned upon them, her eyes flashing through their tears. "Well," she said, lapsing into the vernacular, "I will tell you. I was a little maverick before, and the man put Jesus's brand on my forehead, so when he sees me run-

ning wild on the prairie he will know that I am his little girl."

That conveyed the idea. The children understood, and were respectfully hushed. But the outward baptism is idle unless there be the inward cleansing of the heart which insures the peace of God as the soul's abiding guest and guard. If we are to have constant influence as witnesses for the divine Lord who has redeemed us, we must so surrender ourselves to God in his service that his peace, which passeth all understanding, shall be our constant guard and our credentials which no one can doubt.

Every Christian should take this promise to his heart and go out cherishing its blessed comfort. The secret of peace is trust—to walk by faith when we cannot walk by sight. Whittier in his poem, *My Soul and I*, states it with true insight:

"Know well, my soul, God's hand controls
 Whate'er thou fearest;
 Round him in calmest music rolls
 Whate'er thou hearest.

"What to thee is shadow to him is day,
 And the end he knoweth,
 And not on a blind and aimless way
 The spirit goeth.

.

"Leaning on him, make with reverent meekness
His own thy will,
And with strength from him shall thy utter weakness
Life's task fulfill;

"And that cloud itself, which now before thee
Lies dark in view,
Shall with beams of light from the inner glory
Be stricken through.

"And like meadow mist through autumn's dawn
Uprolling thin,
Its thickest folds when about thee drawn
Let sunlight in."

XXIV

THE PROMISE OF THE RAINBOW

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.—*Genesis ix, 13.*

And there was a rainbow round about the throne.—*Revelation iv, 3.*

THE mercy of God was never more beautifully shown than in the covenant of the rainbow which he made with Noah on Mount Ararat after the deluge. A moment's reflection will enable us to see that if it had not been for the promise coupled with the rainbow the whole world would have been startled and anxious with fear every time the clouds were black and the rain poured down. Terror would have taken the place of hope, and mankind would have lacked the courage and confidence which are necessary to progress and advancement. But God pointed out the rainbow on the cloud, the beauty of which they had no doubt rejoiced in from the beginning, but which hitherto had had no special significance, and made it the token of his promise never again to destroy the world with

flood. And in all the years afterward, when the clouds were very dark, when the rain poured down in torrents and fear was about to arise, the sunshine would fall again upon the cloud as it retreated like a defeated army from the battlefield, and the rainbow would span its retreating form and make it glorious with promise of a brighter to-morrow.

In Ezekiel we have a description of a vision of the throne of God, in which the prophet says: "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake. And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." Ezekiel takes the rainbow as an indication of God's loving thought and merciful purpose toward man. Man may stand upon his feet, reverently, but with self-respect, to hear the message of God, knowing that God's purpose is full of love.

In the book of Revelation the aged John gives us in his vision of the throne of God a similar picture. He tells us that he saw "a rainbow round about the throne" which was in color like an

emerald. This rainbow is a token of the covenant of mercy which God has entered into with all who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. The rainbow round about the throne is a pledge that mercy shall always be as a bow of promise on the power of God. God's power shall be girt about with mercy. The beautiful bow of his love shall span his authority and his justice.

What, then, is the message of the rainbow to us? What is its promise? What is its teaching? In the first place, it ought to teach us that the optimist, and not the pessimist, has the key to human life. There is a bright side to the clouds of existence. There are clouds, but on one side of the cloud the sun is shining and the rainbow spans it with hope.

Poor Thomas Carlyle, dyspeptic and disgruntled, once looked up at the stars and said, with a growl, "It is a sad sight!" But a little girl looked up at the same sight and said, "Mamma, if the wrong side of heaven is so fine, how very beautiful the right side must be!"

An old minister was much interested in a little child of his flock who was ill. She was a pet of his, and he was accustomed to have joyous times with her. During her illness he called, and spoke to her mother at the top of the stairs, rather gloom-

ily, "How is the child?" "'Peak as 'oo do when 'oo're laughing!" came back the voice of the sick child, who had overheard. And it is when we speak as we do when the heart is full of hope and courage and confidence that we speak with the most sanity.

When Martin Luther was ill, and suffering the greatest pain, he did not lose this optimistic courage. Between his groans he said: "These pains and troubles here are like the type which the printers set: as they look now, we have to read them backward, and they seem to have no sense or meaning in them; but yonder, when the Lord prints us off in the life to come, we shall find that they make brave reading." As Christians we must not live without constant appreciation of the token and pledge of the rainbow. Our lives are spanned by the rainbow of God's mercy to us, and we must give the hopefulness of it full play in our hearts, as well as in our conversation and life. The poet utters a true note when she says:

"Talk Happiness. The world is sad enough
Without your woes. No path is wholly rough;
Look for the places that are smooth and clear,
And speak of those to rest the weary ear
Of earth, so hurt by one continuous strain
Of human discontent and grief and pain.

"Talk Faith. The world is better off without
Your uttered ignorance and morbid doubt.
If you have faith in God, or man, or self,
Say so; if not, push back upon the shelf
Of silence your thoughts till faith shall come."

Let us look at some of the clouds where we may surely find the rainbow of promise. One of these is the cloud of business vicissitudes and difficulty—and how common that cloud is. On every hand we behold it. It is a cloud that may come to anyone. There are no investments so safe that war or business panic or death may not suddenly bring that cloud of care upon the horizon. But God's rainbow spans the cloud for the man or the woman who trusts in him. Elijah had terrible clouds of trouble of that sort. He was exiled without funds, but God sent a rainbow in the shape of the ravens to minister to his needs, and afterward the humble family of the widow of Sarepta. The cloud was black enough for Jonah, but, even dark as it was, it, too, had its rainbow of mercy. David gave as his experience that from the time he was a shepherd lad until he was an old gray-headed king he had never known God to forsake the righteous or to fail to take care of his children. There have been many indeed who have found in poverty and in hard and trying experiences in life a gracious

confidence in God, a joyous communion with Christ, and a sensitive and instant faith that they had never known before. If I speak to any who are in the very throes of care concerning their present situation or future prospects in a business way, I want to say to you: Cling to your confidence in God; stay your heart on him. Just as surely as the rainbow follows the storm and spans the clouds when the sun shines on them after rain, God means mercy and good to you, and if you will allow him he will make his mercy precious to your heart.

There is the rainbow that spans the cloud of sacred grief, that deep heart sorrow that comes from the separation from those whom we love. O, the loneliness of it, the deep yearning of the soul, and the crying out of the heart like a child for its mother. I would not underrate it or belittle it, or say to any who are in sorrow or grief for those "whom they have loved long since and lost awhile" to try to forget their loved ones. That is only to insult true grief. We do not want to forget. God does not want us to forget. It is not good for us to forget. We are not beasts of the field to eat and drink and die in indifference. We are immortals, and our loved ones who have gone from us are immortal, and the

parting is not for long, and the reunion shall be for eternity. Therefore not forgetfulness, but memory, sweet and fragrant, is the secret of peace and of comfort. And that is the bow that spans the cloud of sorrow.

David found the real secret of peace. When his child died he went and ordered a meal to be set before him, and ate with his usual zest and appetite. His servants were astonished and said to him: "We do not understand you. For days, while the child has been sick, you would not eat nor drink, and your whole thought was taken up with the child. But now that the child is dead you are ready to take your food." And David answered them with greatest sanity when he said, in substance: "I acted but naturally. While the child was yet alive I thought it was possible that it might be healed. I was not sure then that God meant to take the child from me. But now that the child is dead, why should I fast? The child shall not return to me, but I shall go to him." Ah, in that last sentence was David's bow in the cloud. The rainbow across the cloud was the hope of immortality.

Only yesterday I went into a home where only one remained out of a family group. Father, mother, brother, sisters, all were gone, and just

one left that bore the family name, and though there were grief and tears, and a feeling of loneliness, yet my heart was inspired and cheered by the sublime faith which I found there. "Ah," said that good woman, "all that I had on earth has gone home now to God. The world seems very lonely, and I sometimes stretch out my arms, and feel how empty they are, but instantly I rejoice when I remember their farewells, and the memory of all their loving and sweet lives comes back to me, and I know they are with God. They cannot come back to me, but ere long I shall go to them, and I know they wait for me there." That was her rainbow across the clouds of sorrow and death, of grief and trouble, and it was a bow that was beautiful and filled her heart with peace.

There is a rainbow across the clouds of sin. Sin makes a dark cloud over a man's head, a cloud full of black portents, full of anger and threatening. There can be no doubt that the cloud has doom in it, and that for unrepented sin there is no hope offered in God's Word. But across that cloud so angry and threatening, which has in it such a deluge of doom, there is a rainbow which is a token of the infinite mercy of God. Though a man who covers his sin shall not prosper, that rainbow is the perpetual pledge that "Whoso con-

fesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy." And, thank God, that is true. However dark the cloud, it may be turned away by the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, the divine Saviour.

Dr. Yatman, the evangelist, once preached on that text in a little Southwestern town, and immediately afterward went back to the hotel and to his room. He was tired and lay down on the bed. A few minutes later a cowboy, with a revolver in his belt, came into the room, turned and locked the door, and threw the key on the floor.

Yatman was rather startled at the performance, but the young fellow soon showed that he had nothing to fear. He wanted to know of Dr. Yatman if there was any hope of forgiveness for a man who had deliberately stolen several thousand dollars from another who had trusted him.

Yatman raised himself up in bed and asked: "Who is the man?"

"Who is the man?"

"I, great heavens—I am the one!"

"Tell me about it—tell all out, and if I can help you I will. If I cannot, I know One who can."

Then out of a broken heart his rough visitor told a sad tale of sin. He was at the head of a great ranch which belonged to an English owner. As trusted agent and manager, he had stolen over

thirteen thousand dollars. Stealing makes a man a thief, and the truth of the sermon had shown him his real self. It was not so much the money he had stolen as the thought of what the stealing had made him—a thief! Over and over again he repeated the words in horror: “I am a thief! I am a thief! What shall I do?”

Yatman told him: “Repent; restore the money; ask God for mercy. Let him give you a new heart and a good life. Let him make you good and keep you so.”

He was able to pay back all he had taken. It was his own proposition to add the interest. They figured it all out at six per cent—fourteen thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars in round figures.

The two had prayer together, and when they rose from their knees Yatman said: “Isn’t it good to be made good?”

“Yes, better than gold,” said he. He had found the rainbow of mercy round about the throne. Some of you need to see that rainbow to-night. Over your head also hangs that terrible cloud of sin. But there is a rainbow spanning the cloud for you, too, if you will repent of your sins and, forsaking them, accept the salvation which Jesus Christ purchased for you with his own blood.

XXV

THE PROMISED MEASURE OF REWARD

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.—*Luke vi, 38.*

CHRIST speaks here as one having authority, one who knows human life and can reveal the secret laws by which it is governed. Christ's life on earth was very narrow and he had had but little opportunity to observe the widely diversified conditions under which men lived; and yet he announced the great laws of life so clearly and so correctly that they are the great court of appeal to-day. No man who has ever lived has said so many wise things about the science of living as Jesus Christ. You can compress all he ever said about it into a small pamphlet, but ponderous tomes, indeed, whole libraries full of books, have been written and are being written to elaborate those simple epigrammatic declarations which the young Peasant of Nazareth made about life.

This tremendous declaration made in our text, that the returns of life shall be measured by the outgo, that our own half-bushel will be used to measure back to us the result, that we shall get what we give, is true in whatever way we take it—in relation to ourselves, to our fellow men, or to God.

In the first place, this law of life laid down by Jesus is true in our relation to our fellow men. They will give us back what we give. They will adopt our standard of measurement in dealing with us. It is like the little boy and his first experience with the echo. He came in one day and declared to his mother that there was a boy in the garden who mocked him.

"How do you mean, Joseph?" said his mother.

"Why," said the child, "I was calling out, 'Ho!' and this boy said, 'Ho!' So I said to him, 'Who are you?' and he answered, 'Who are you?' I said, 'What is your name?' He said, 'What is your name?' And I said to him, 'Why don't you show yourself?' He said, 'Show yourself?' And I jumped over the ditch, and I ran into the woods where I had heard his voice, and I could not find him, and I came back, and said, 'If you don't come out I will punch your head!' And he said, 'I will punch your head!'"

The little boy's mother was wise, and she drew him to her side and said, "Ah, Joseph! If you had said, 'I love you,' he would have said, 'I love you.' If you had said, 'Your voice is sweet,' he would have said, 'Your voice is sweet.' Whatever you said to him he would have said back to you."

And so it is with our fellow men. In their dealings with us all through life this great law will hold good. What we say to others they will, in the long run, say back to us.

History is full of illustrations of that justice, which men call "poetic justice," where a man, even in this world, gets back full measure and running over into his bosom of that which he has measured out to others. It was the Regent Morton who introduced into Scotland that horrible instrument of torture and death from the Spanish Inquisition known as the "Maiden," and he himself was hugged to death by the cruel machine. Haman was hanged on the gallows which he had built for Mordecai.

On the other hand, the law is just as true in the return of good for good. I remember that this is the Emerson Centenary Sunday, and in that sweet-spirited philosopher we have a happy illustration of our theme. Emerson once said: "Every man takes care that his neighbor shall not cheat

him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he do not cheat his neighbor. Then all goes well. He has changed his market-cart into a chariot of the sun. What a day dawns when we have taken to heart the doctrine of faith! To prefer, as a better investment, being to doing; being to seeming; logic to rhythm and to display; the year to the day; the life to the year; character to performance;—and have come to know that justice will be done us; and if our genius is slow, the term will be long.”

Emerson gave out to his fellow men marvelous sweetness in spirit and word and deed. And even while he lived they gave back to him full measure in response. Dr. Olin A. Curtis tells us that he heard the last public lecture that Emerson ever delivered. It was in the Old South Meetinghouse in Boston. The great philosopher was reading from his manuscript, when he suddenly stopped and was in evident confusion. At this his daughter stood up and said, slowly and very distinctly, “Father, I think you will find the missing sheet in your pocket.” Quickly, and yet with a manner of deliberation, Emerson put his right hand into his coat pocket and brought out the sheet, he looked it over, and, with a peculiar nod of satisfaction, placed it on the desk. Then he turned toward his

daughter and smiled. Curtis declares that that smile was as beautiful a thing as he ever saw on a human face. It was kindness, gratitude, love—all in a look. The entire audience broke into cheers.

Perhaps no man of his day received so much genuine love along with his fame, from so widely diversified an audience, as the late Professor Henry Drummond. Men and women not only admired him, but there was a certain touch of tender love in it everywhere. And that was true to this law that we are studying. Drummond gave men love, and he got it back, full measure, pressed down, and running over.

If you would go up into the Highlands of Scotland you could find there in a certain cottage a withered rose. Protected by glass and neatly framed, it holds the place of honor in the best room; and when the white-haired mother looks at it she is reminded not only of the son who died far away among strangers, but with grateful love she remembers always Henry Drummond, who sent her that precious rose.

Her boy went to Mentone, in France, hoping there to find health and strength that could never come to him in the bleak Highlands of Scotland. The mother could not go with him; it was very

difficult to find money for his expenses. He did not get well, and when at last he must die among strangers the mother could not even go to bid him good-bye. Her heart was broken up there in her cottage home in Scotland as she thought of her boy, laid in his lonely grave in a far-off land by the hand of strangers.

Now, Henry Drummond did not know the boy, but incidentally he heard of his death, and his quick sympathy went out to the lonely old mother back in Scotland. A little later, when he went to Mentone, he did not forget her. He sought out the grave of the Scotch laddie, and, picking a rose blooming there, sent it to the mother, with a tender little letter, full of description of the place, such as he knew would make a picture before which a mother could stand and look and be comforted. It was a little thing to do, and yet it was a great thing. It was love, and he got love back in return.

We make all sorts of excuses for ourselves for living lives that are hard and unloving, but we must remember that no excuses can save us from the certain harvest that we shall reap from the seeds sown. Many people are like the little girl who, on the morning of the first of April, sitting at the breakfast table, said to her father, "I am going to catch a lot of girls to-day; I have studied

up a whole lot of tricks; but I hope no one will catch me."

The father said, "Don't you remember, darling, what I told you about the golden rule, 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you'? And if you do not want them to catch you, ought you to catch them?"

That seemed a puzzle to the child, and she sat still a minute or so, and then said, "Say, papa, I don't believe Jesus meant the golden rule for the first day of April."

So there are other people who try to think that Jesus did not mean the golden rule for society, or for the stock market, or any number of social and business and political snarls where men and women are tempted to live cunning and critical and greedy lives. But remember that excuses will not save us from the harvest. Sow cunning, and you reap cunning; sow greed, and greed will pay you back; sow social insincerity and display, and it will come back in your own half-bushel, as cold and insincere and hard as you have given.

Our text is true in the relations between our own souls and God. God gives back to us, in running-over measure, all that we give unselfishly for the blessing of our fellow men and through devotion to him.

This is true, first, in our own religious experience. A man hired a house of another who, up to that time, had always lived alone in his own house. The tenant moved his furniture in, supposing, of course, he was to occupy the entire house. But after the furniture had been moved in he found that the owner had reserved for himself one small room. The tenant objected to this, and after some discussion told the landlord that unless he moved out, he would. He refused to go, so he lost a tenant. There are many people who are living starved and joyless Christian lives for the same reason. They have made a public confession of Christ and have united with his church; but there are one or more rooms in their heart that they have held back from God, and they will not give him the key to those chambers. If we treat our heavenly Father that way he cannot bestow upon us the blessings which he longs to give us. But if we will turn all the keys over to him he will then give us all the blessings which he has bestowed upon his saints in any age of the world. If you are having little joy in your Christian life you may be sure it is because you are giving up very little to God. God has never yet cheated a human soul, and he will not cheat you. It seems strange that we should be satisfied to live a single

week, nay, a single day, without seeking the fullest and most satisfactory friendship that it is possible for us to have with Jesus Christ. When we consider that such friendship is not only the greatest comfort that can come to us here in this world, but that it is absolutely essential to our joy and peace in the world to come, how strange it is that we should delay entering into a perfect communion and fellowship with our divine Lord. He assures us that this, too, is in harmony with this law announced in our text. If we confess Christ on earth, before men, he will confess us in heaven in the presence of his Father and the holy angels. If we make much of Jesus here, making him Lord over all in our hearts, giving him full sway in our lives, then he will make much of us in heaven, and we shall not be strangers in that realm of immortality, but shall find our mansion awaiting our occupancy. Life is so short on earth; we are only tenants at will here, and no man can tell what day he shall be called away; hence it behooves us to enter into such friendship with Jesus, and be on such terms with him, that any day or hour the call may come our place in heaven will be ready for us, and we shall rest in perfect assurance that our divine Saviour and Lord is waiting with

smiling face and welcoming words to receive us. If we live in that watchful and confident spirit we shall be able to sing:

"I shall see my blessed Master
Face to face,
In the glory that is coming,
Face to face.
Oh, my heart leaps out to meet him,
I shall hear him, I shall greet him,
I shall see him face to face.

"When I greet my blessed Master
Face to face,
And I commune in the glory
Face to face,
I shall thank him that he sought me,
That to his fair home he brought me,
When I greet him face to face.

"How I love to think I'll see him
Face to face,
And I know he'll commune with me
Face to face;
On the banks of that calm river,
With my Master walking ever,
I shall gaze upon his face."

XXVI

A MAN WHO NEVER STAGGERED AT THE PROMISES OF GOD

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.—*Romans* iv, 20, 21.

THE doubter is always a staggerer. He proceeds, if he does proceed at all, like a man who is imperfect in his vision and who is anticipating disaster at every step. He stumbles on the way and expects to stumble still worse at the next step.

This is a very unique figure which we are to study. The word "stagger" in its various forms is used altogether only five times in the entire Bible, and in the other four cases it is used to describe the attempts to walk which are made by a drunken man. Now a drunken man staggers because the power to will and govern his limbs has been for the time being paralyzed by strong drink. He is helpless, comparatively, because he has not the power in his brain to make his feet go straight. He has enough power left to order them to go, but

not enough to make them do it in the right way, and so he staggers, and perhaps there is no more pitiable sight ever witnessed than to see a big, strong, mature man who ought to be by nature in the fullness of his powers, so under the bondage of strong drink that he staggers helplessly down the street, an object of pity and shame to his fellow men.

Paul must have had a picture like that in his mind when he wrote the text. To him the man who hesitates and fails to accept the promises of God and act upon them is a staggerer like a drunken man. He is all the time divided in his judgment in regard to his conduct. He feels that he ought to serve God, and yet he doubts and hesitates and staggers along so that his knowledge of God's Word is of no real value to him.

Paul points out in contrast to the staggerer the splendid illustration furnished by the life of Abraham. Here was a man who never staggered at the promises of God. He believed God and trusted him, and the result was that he lived a pure and courageous life, walking right on across the deserts of earth till he reached the realms of glory.

When God promised that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed he was childless,

and the world looking on saw no possibility that this could be realized, but Abraham staggered not. He left the fulfillment of the promise to God. When God called Abraham to make his journey to Mount Moriah and sacrifice on the altar his only son Isaac, who had been born to him in his old age, and who was the only token, visible, of the fulfillment of God's promise, he did not stagger at the divine word, but made his journey, climbed the mountain, built the altar, and stayed his hand only at the voice of God's angel.

If you follow the life of Abraham, you will find that the secret of this steadiness of faith lay in the fact that he did not assume to be himself responsible for the fulfillment of God's promise. He took no anxiety to himself on that account. He did his own duty. He obeyed implicitly the command which God laid upon him, and then he left all the results to God. That is the way to go with certain step through the darkness and perplexity of this world.

A group of men were talking one day about the burdens of duty, when one of them declared that they were sometimes too heavy to be borne.

"Not," said another, "if you carry only your own burden, and don't try to take God's work out of his hands. Last year I crossed the Atlantic

with one of the most skillful and faithful captains of the great liners. We had a terrific storm, during which for thirty-eight hours he remained on the bridge, striving to save his ship and his passengers. When the danger was over, I said to him, 'It must be a terrible thought at such a time that you are responsible for the lives of over a thousand human beings.'

"'No,' he said, solemnly, 'I am not responsible for the life of one man on this ship. My responsibility is to run the ship with all the skill and faithfulness possible to any man. God himself is responsible for all the rest.'" Now, that is a lesson that you and I want to learn. All our trouble about the seeming improbability of the promises of God being realized in any particular case vanishes when we turn it over to God and do our own duty simply and confidently and let God take care of the fulfillment of his promise. That is the path of reverence and faith, and it is the only path of peace.

Abraham kept himself in this courageous and confident frame of mind by living a life of prayer and worship. Wherever he went, there he built an altar to God and worshiped him. So consistent and persistent was he in this that through all the East he became known, and is known to this day,

after thousands of years have passed away, as "the friend of God." It colored his life; it distinguished his reputation; he loomed up largely among the nations as a man of constant prayer. This by no means suggests that Abraham was a monkish kind of man who lived the life of a hermit, or that he was a goody-goody sort of a man who was always talking pious platitudes. No, indeed. He was a keen, broad-minded, business man. He had hundreds of servants and large flocks of sheep and cattle and camels and carried on an immense business through the aid of caravans, which were the railroads of that age. He was a very rich man, highly honored, whose word was law to many people, and he was judge and governor, priest and counselor, and father to all his people. He had to decide every day on hundreds of questions that related to matters of business, as well as domestic, social, and tribal affairs. And in all these things Abraham was a man full of wisdom and common sense. Yet, rich as he was, powerful as he was, keen-headed as he was in business, so genuine was his religion, so earnest was his purpose to serve God, so keen and true was his faith in God, so prayerful was his spirit, that when men talked about him they did not speak of him as they did about the rich fool, and call

him "Abraham, the rich," "Abraham, the man with the largest flocks and herds in the East," but they called him "Abraham, the friend of God."

I am sure we need to learn this lesson. There is always the danger that we will allow our business, which engrosses us so completely six days in the week, to narrow our minds and hearts until we become creatures of the one thought, the one business, and lose the breadth of soul and the elevation of spirit of those who make the service of God the greatest thing in their lives.

In a book published many years ago by George William Curtis, entitled *Prue and I*, there is a chapter called "Mr. Titbottom's Spectacles." The magical quality of these spectacles was that, when their owner looked through them at people, he ceased to see persons as they ordinarily appeared in the street; he saw their real essential character personified. Wonderful were the revelations that were made. He looked at one man, and saw nothing but a ledger; another was simply a billiard cue; another, a jockey cap; another, a pack of cards. He looked at women: one was a broomstick; another, a fashion plate; a third, a needle, and so on.

Mr. Curtis's pleasantry suggests a great truth, that it is possible for us to give ourselves with such devotion to our occupation, or to our physical

or social ambitions, or to our pleasures, that we shall develop only that side of our natures, and thus lose the greatest blessings that can come to us, those which are connected with our spiritual natures. It is said that Darwin, the great scientist, did not come to know that there was any pleasure in music for him until near the end of his life, and that when he made the discovery he wept bitter tears, saying that it was the mistake of his life that he had not developed that side of his nature. Surely there are multitudes who are making the greatest mistake of life in not developing their powers of faith and hope and love through the sincere worship of God.

Abraham's life of prayer and his unstaggering acceptance of God's promises gave him keen spiritual vision. Wherever he went in that land of deserts he was never out of sight of "the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." He was only a pilgrim in the Orient; his chief thoughts and his happiest meditations were concerning the heavens beyond. He was on the way there, and it was far more important that he should be equipped for heaven, where he was to finally reside, than that he should be well adapted for the lands through which he traveled, where he was only a pilgrim.

When I was a little boy in Oregon a young man bade farewell to his father and mother in Indiana, and came out to Oregon and made his home there. He was an industrious young fellow, and soon became very prosperous. After a while he sent for his brother to come out and live with him, and later he sent for his sister and her husband. One by one the entire family emigrated to Oregon except the old father and mother. And do you wonder that the father became far more interested in Oregon than in Indiana, where he had lived all his days? The old man searched greedily for every paper and book and pamphlet that he could find about Oregon. He could talk to his neighbors by the hour about the climate and the soil and the forests and the mining interests of Oregon. And so it went on, till one day the old man got a letter from his eldest son, saying, "I am coming for you, father." After that the old gentleman was more interested than ever. If he had talked much of Oregon before, he now talked of but little else. To his farm hands, to his neighbors, to everybody he sang one song; it was a song of that sunset land where his children were, and to which his son was coming to guide him. So if, like Abraham, our citizenship is in heaven, and we have clear vision of the home God is building for us there,

and keen appreciation of the words of Jesus, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," we shall, as the years go on, think more of heaven by far than of earth.

The other day in my pastoral work I called upon an old lady who is suffering very much from rheumatism, which has bent her poor body nearly double and twisted and distorted her hands until they are a sad sight. And yet she is cheerful and happy and full of confidence in God. Tried and troubled as she is, she does not stagger at God's promises. As I sat by her side I said to her, "What a lovely thing it is to know that there is no rheumatism in heaven." A smile of infinite peace spread over her face. "O," said she, "you do not know what a joy that is to me. Again and again I comfort myself with the promise that there will be no pain there. And nights when I cannot sleep I just revel in delightful anticipations of the day when I shall be free from the suffering body, and I shall meet my husband, and my children, and all my loved ones, and never, never leave them again. Some people are afraid to think about death, but I just love to think about it, and it is the best treat I ever have to picture my meeting with my dear ones in heaven."

To have this clear and beautiful vision of spiritual things we must live Abraham's life of prayer and faith. If we live a low, earthly, groveling life we must expect that its dust and smoke and soot will constantly annoy us. While we work in the midst of the things of this world, our purposes, our sacrifices, our prayers must rise up into the sublime realm of faith and love.

There was trouble with the kitchen range in a certain house, and an expert was sent for to rectify it. The man came and looked it over, and said: "The fault is in the chimney. A stove has, of course, no draft in itself; it is only its connection with the flue that makes the fire burn and the smoke ascend, and the higher the chimney the stronger the draft. At shops and foundries, where fierce fires are needed, they run their stacks up to a great height. Your stove clogs, chokes, and smokes because your chimney is too low. You must build up higher."

Our spiritual lives are affected in the same way. The fires divine burn low and choke too easily; the heavenly love and aspiration is often clogged by life's daily wear and fret; holy faith seems to smolder instead of flaming forth with force enough and heat enough to carry away life's troubles, because the zest, the enthusiasm, the

draft of our spiritual life is insufficient. You must build higher. You must build with Bible reading; with secret prayer; with much meditation upon holy things; with kind and loving and self-sacrificing service of your fellow men. You must get into fellowship with God and keep there by loving worship and service, and there shall come to be a draft to your spiritual living that will carry everything before it.

XXVII

THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.—*Romans viii, 37.*

THIS is an utterance intended to encourage and inspire men and women who are in the furnace of trial. Paul has been describing the terrible persecution the Christians of that day had to face. He has been recounting some of the fierce trials through which they had to pass. To the Christian of Paul's time loyalty to Christ was likely any day to mean tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or death by the sword; yet he declares that in experiences like these they were conquerors. As Christ in the wilderness, fiercely assaulted by the devil, was still a conqueror, and though he came away weak and hungry in body, came strong in soul, buoyant in spirit, having fellowship with angels, so the Christians of Paul's day, fiercely beset as they were and suffering many things in Christ's name, were still victorious, retaining their peace and honor.

Our study ought to have great comfort for us. If the Christians of the first century, tried and persecuted as they were, could pass through the fire without losing their Christianity, and under such stress of suffering could maintain their joy and peace, and against such fearful odds could so make conquest of circumstances that they counted either the stake or the cross a thing to be desired and to be rejoiced over, surely we, in our time, may trust God to take care of us, and in every temptation to make a way for our escape. I may be speaking to some one who is at this moment beset by threats of danger. Temptations loom up about you and cause you to fear for the safety of your Christian character. If you will trust God there is no danger in your situation. If you forget him you will be trampled upon and overthrown. But so long as you trust in God and keep in communication with him you may overcome all opposition that will be brought against you.

A gentleman went one day to visit the United States Mint in the city of San Francisco. He had a friend who was cashier of the assay office, and was invited to inspect that part of the institution. He was greatly impressed with the enormous quantity of gold and silver which he saw on every

hand, and remarked to his friend, the cashier, "I should think you would be afraid of robbers here; it seems to me it would be a very easy matter for a man to hold a pistol to your head while others would seize the treasure." The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a number of uniformed guards had him in their clutches, and he was being roughly dragged from the room. Then the cashier raised his hand as a signal to stop, and said, "That's enough; I only wanted to show him I was amply protected." While his friend had been speaking of the danger the cashier, unseen by his visitor, had pressed his finger on a button, and the guards, who were always near, though hidden, instantly appeared in the room.

Prayer is an electric signal system, a system of wireless telegraphy, by which the tempted soul is able instantly to summon legions of angels to its defense. As the angels of the Lord encamped around Elisha; as they ministered to Jesus in the wilderness, and in the garden of Gethsemane; as they came to lead Peter out of prison, so they still are God's messengers to the heirs of salvation, and every Christian, however humble his position, however surrounded by difficulties, may say with perfect assurance, "They that be for me are more than they that be against me."

There is something very fascinating about Paul's statement here concerning the kind of conquest the Christian shall make: "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors." It is not enough to say that the Christian conquers his enemies. He does more than that. There have been victories on many a hard-fought field where the victor paid so great a price for his victory that he could only weep over it after it was accomplished. When the English won Quebec it was at cost of the life of the intrepid and glorious Wolfe, who died as the news of victory came to his failing ears. Many a general has felt after winning a battle that the immense loss of brave soldiers rendered it almost worse than a defeat. But the Christian loses nothing in the fight. Instead, he gains by every struggle, however intense and severe it may be. He becomes a better soldier, a nobler man, with every conquest, and so he is more than a conqueror since he not only wins his victory, but comes out of every battle stronger in every way than when he entered it.

There is something enthusiastic about this idea of Christianity. If a man looks upon his religion as he does upon insurance which he hates to pay, and does so only because he dare not do otherwise, regarding it only as the question of saving

a soul from eternal disaster at the last, he will not get much enthusiasm and joy out of his religious faith. But if he throws his whole heart and soul into the contest, with unreserved faith in God, and with whole-hearted devotion and love to his Saviour, expecting the largest and noblest success, then he is more than a conqueror, for he shall not only save his soul, but under God he shall develop a soul worth saving. If we trust God for large things he will not disappoint us.

A traveling man with only a moderate income had a daughter who was in her last term at the grammar school. He said to her, "If you graduate with the highest honors, and read the valedictory at the closing exercises at the school, I'll give you a watch." Sure enough, after a little while, they received word from the principal that she had been appointed valedictorian. Now, the father was not getting a large salary, and he had had in his mind an inexpensive chatelaine watch, such as some of her young friends carried; but one day he happened to overhear her telling some of her school friends that "Papa is going to give me a watch like Aunt Lizzie's." That was an expensive timepiece, but immediately the father said to himself, "I'll get her a watch like her aunt's if I have to go without my lunch for a time

to make up the difference. I cannot disappoint the child's faith in me."

And so it is sure that God will not withhold from us any good thing that we have the faith to trust him for. You remember how Jesus said to some who came to him, "According to your faith be it unto you." The path of the "more than conqueror" is the path of faith and trust in the infinite willingness of God to bestow blessings upon his children.

Paul put it very clearly that all the Christian's victories come to him through the atoning love of Jesus Christ. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." We have no victory except in Jesus. The disciples on that stormy night on the lake, when they were about to perish, had victory and were more than conquerors in the hushed waves and the peaceful coming to land, but it was through the loving Christ who came to them through the storm and commanded the wind to cease and the waves to be still.

Ignatius, who was martyred in the year 107, said: "Let fire and the cross, let wild beasts, let all the malice of the devil come upon me; only may I enjoy Jesus Christ. It is better for me to die for Christ than to reign over the ends of the earth. Stand firm," he added, "as an anvil when

it is beaten upon. It is part of a brave combatant to be wounded and yet to overcome." Christ was to him a friend nearer and more real than any earthly companion.

The Christian's fatal blunder is when he lets his friendship with Christ grow cold. A Christian man visited a friend who was building a new house. The host took him through a part of the unfinished rooms, and told him what they were to be used for when finished. He pointed out the dining room, and the parlor, and the chambers for the different members of the family. Coming to a small room on the second floor, he said, "This is the Lord's room, dedicated to him—my closet, a place where I can come to worship God." The man was at the time living very close to Jesus, and his visitor was rejoiced that he was to have a room of this kind.

Months after the same visitor came again; his friend was now living in the house, which had been finished. During their conversation in the early part of his visit his host asked him to pray for him, for he felt that he was not living as he ought to live, and that he was drifting away from the Christian life. In the afternoon the owner of the house took his friend through the house again, that he might see how it looked now that it was fin-

ished. As they passed the little room which was to be dedicated to God the friend pushed the door open and saw that it was filled with pieces of furniture, rolls of old carpet, joints of stovepipe, and various things that there was no use for in other rooms. There was not a place left big enough for one to kneel. He turned away with a sad heart. Toward sunset the two men went out for a walk, and during that walk the visitor said to his host, "My brother, you asked me to pray for you; I'll do it; but I haven't much hope my prayer will be answered until you clean out that room and use it for the purpose you first intended." This man had lost his power of conquest because he had shut Jesus out of his house and heart. All our triumph is "through him that loved us." In fellowship with Jesus, trusting in him, we are perfectly safe.

A lady was once riding in her carriage, when she noticed a beautiful flower growing in the shelter of a large rock. She stopped, intending to remove it to her garden, but found that, delicate as it appeared, it resisted all her efforts, because the root ran under the rock and so entwined about it that it could not be separated from it. Dear friend, if the roots of your love and fellowship run under and twine about the Rock of Ages, your life

shall be safe in that shelter, and no enemy shall be able to dislodge you.

To any who hear me who have not yet yielded to the invitation of Jesus Christ to accept salvation, I want lovingly and earnestly to press home upon your heart and your conscience the great message that your only possibility of salvation from sin and the fearful wages which sin earns is through Jesus Christ, who loves you, and who gave himself for you. It is not only that he has paid the debt of sin on the cross, and made it possible for God to be just and yet the justifier of him who believes on Christ, but also because you have so entangled your soul in the meshes of sin, of vain imaginations, and of evil habit, that no one but Jesus Christ is able to bring you out from your dangerous situation and guide you to goodness, to peace, to safety, to happiness, and to heaven.

Mr. J. W. Bothem, a traveling salesman and a most earnest Christian worker, has published a little book entitled *Earthly Stories with Heavenly Meanings*, in which he tells this incident: Years ago Paul Morphy was the champion chess player of the world. A friend of his one day invited him to come and look at a valuable painting he had just purchased. It was called "The Chess Player,"

and represented Satan playing chess with a young man, the stake being the man's soul. The game had reached the stage where it was the young man's move; but to the average looker-on at the picture he seemed to be checkmated. There seemed to be no move he could make that would not mean defeat for him, and the strong feature of the picture was the look of awful despair that was on the man's face as he realized his soul was lost and the cruel, hideous grin that was on Satan's face as he saw his victory.

Paul Morphy studied the picture for a long time. He knew more about chess than did the artist who painted the picture, and after a while he called for a chessboard and men, and, placing them in exactly the same position as they were in the painting, he said, "I'll take the young man's place, and make the move;" and he made the move that would have defeated Satan and set the young man free.

O my friend, you who are caught in the meshes of folly and sin until you seem to be checkmated at every move, that story may illustrate your life. In the game of life you have been morally worsted and sin has you at a disadvantage. Move wherever you will, the end is disaster. I long to help you to see this day the face of the Divine Redeemer,

who knows you, and knows all about your life, and who has been tempted in all points like as you are, who is acquainted with all the machinations of the devil, and who is able and willing to come and take your place and make the move that will set you free. And the man whom Christ sets free is free indeed. You will not only be a conqueror, but more than a conqueror, through him that loves you.

XXVIII

THE PROMISE OF THE MORNING

Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.—*Psalms xxx, 5.*

THE promise of the morning in this psalm of David reminds us of that poetic outburst of Paul where he exclaims, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The Christian is not exempt from the trying experiences that are incident to our human life. He lives in the body, the same as others, and the body is constantly getting older, and like an old house needs patching up, and ever and anon afflictions and trials, which are frequently God's messengers to us to teach us, will come. But these are only incidental. They are like the night, which may be dark and dreary, but which vanishes before the dawn of the day and gives way to the glorious promise of the morning. This text is a promise that no night shall be permanent to the good man, and though the night of weeping may come, and must be expected, the sunshine of the morning shall dry its tears.

Is it not well, however, that we should permit the shadowy foreground of this bright promise to solemnize our hearts with a consideration of the great truth that tears are a part of this world's experience? The shadows are just as certainly a part of the necessary experience of this life we are living as the sunshine. And as in a land where there is nothing but sunshine there is barrenness and desert, so tears and clouds and difficulties are essential characteristics of a fertile moral and spiritual nature.

Father Ryan, with the soul of a mystic, has, withal, rare spiritual insight, and in one of his poems he brings out with great clearness the sobering fact that the shadows and the tears must be expected. He sings:

"There never was a valley without some faded flower,
There never was a heaven without some little cloud;
The face of day may flash with light in any morning
hour,
But evening soon will come with her shadow-woven
shroud.

"There never was a river without its mists of gray,
There never was a forest without its fallen leaf;
And Joy may walk beside us down the windings of our
way,
When lo! there sounds a footstep, and we meet the
face of Grief.

"There never was a seashore without its drifting wreck,
 There never was an ocean without its moaning wave;
 And the golden gleams of glory the summer sky that fleck,
 Shine where dead stars are sleeping in their azure-
 mantled grave.

"There never was a streamlet, however crystal clear,
 Without a shadow resting on the ripples of its tide;
 Hope's brightest robes are brodered with the sable
 fringe of fear,
 And she lures us, but abysses girt her path on either
 side.

"The shadow of the mountain falls athwart the lovely
 plain,
 And the shadow of the cloudlet hangs above the
 mountain's head;
 And the highest hearts and lowest wear the shadow of
 some pain,
 And the smile has scarcely flitted ere the anguished
 tear is shed.

"For no eyes have there been ever without a weary tear,
 And those lips cannot be human that have never
 heaved a sigh;
 For without the dreary winter there has never been a
 year,
 And the tempests hide their terrors in the calmest
 summer sky.

"The cradle means the coffin, and the coffin means the
 grave;
 The mother's song scarce hides the *De profundis* of
 the priest;
 You may cull the fairest roses any May-day ever gave,
 But they wither while you wear them ere the ending
 of your feast.

"So this dreary life is passing—and we move amid its
 maze,
 And we grope along together, half in darkness, half
 in light;
 And our hearts are often burdened by the mysteries of
 our ways,
 Which are never all in shadow and are never wholly
 bright.

"And our dim eyes ask a beacon, and our weary feet a
 guide,
 And our hearts of all life's mysteries seek the mean-
 ing and the key;
 And a cross gleams o'er our pathway—on it hangs the
 Crucified,
 And he answers all our yearnings by the whisper,
 'Follow me.'

"Life is a burden; bear it.
 Life is a duty; dare it.
 Life is a thorn crown; wear it.
 Though it break your heart in twain,
 Though the burden crush you down,
 Close your lips and hide the pain;
 First the cross, and then the crown."

But sobering as are the reflections of the poet,
 and sober as are the facts in our everyday life, the
 blessed promise of God still remains, a promise
 which he will not fail to keep, that after the night
 of weeping, to every true soul, there shall come
 the morning, with all that that signifies in hope
 and courage and joy.

The morning means opportunity—opportunity to do the work for which our fingers itch and our hearts long. David speaks in another place about taking “the wings of the morning.” The morning has wings, wings of light that travel rapidly. The morning means a wide horizon, an open field, and a fair chance for exertion. God will not fail to give every true soul an opportunity. Sometimes it will not come in the way we expect. When John Bunyan had found forgiveness of his sins, and his rapturous soul danced with thanksgiving to God all day long, and his tongue longed to give honor to Christ, a wicked king thrust him into jail. Bunyan groaned and felt that it was the end of opportunity. But it is quite likely that if the king had left Bunyan alone we never would have heard of him. If he had preached to his heart’s content he might have done a good deal of good to a few thousand people, and then he would have died, and in a generation or two his name would have been forgotten. The devil overleaped himself when he put Bunyan in the Bedford jail. It was opening the wings of the morning to him. There he wrote *Pilgrim’s Progress*, and his audience from hundreds and thousands was multiplied into untold millions. Before, he could only speak one language, and now he was to speak in every great tongue on

the globe. His weeping endured for a night, but untold joy and victory came with the morning.

Paul had his nights of weeping; he had many journeys he wished to make, and many preaching campaigns upon which he wished to enter; and if he had been permitted, those wonderful letters to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, to the Thessalonians, and others, that add so much to the comfort and inspiration of the Christian world, would never have been written. Before he died Paul had come to know that even on other grounds his imprisonment and his chains had been an advantage to him and to the world. His discouragement and his weeping tarried for a night, but the morning of joy and hope and thanksgiving came to him in their turn.

Let us do our duty and make sure that our morning of opportunity will come for us. We may not know it when it comes at first, but we shall come to recognize that all things are working together for our good, and our tears shall be wiped away by the warmth of the morning sun.

The promise of the morning is a promise of courage for the good and of rebuke for the evil. Honest people are housed up at night. It is the burglar who goes forth in the dark. The things that prey upon the world go out under the cover

of night; owls seek their prey; wolves and ravenous beasts find their greatest opportunity at night. In the morning man and all the beasts which are his servants are awake and alive with activity. The great work of the world is done in the daytime. While modern civilization has added a great deal of night work, it is, after all, but a very small part compared with the work of the day. The great majority of men and women sleep at night and fill the day with the hum of their industry, the shouts of their rejoicing, and the cheering notes of their courageous achievements. All this should encourage us in times of gloom and disappointment. Has the night fallen upon you? Do you find yourself in the midst of seeming defeat in your plans, your eyes full of tears? Then there is just one thing to do, and that is to trust God and do right, so long as this night of weeping shall last. One thing is sure, it is not permanent. You have the absolute promise of God that no trial shall come to you that is not the common, ordinary lot for the rest of mankind. You have also the assurance that if you will go quietly on doing right, and bearing your burdens with meekness and confidence, God will, himself, devise a way for your escape out of these present complication. You have still further assurance

that, while you are suffering these afflictions and trials, if you remain true to God they shall act on you exactly as a furnace acts on the ore that is cast into it, the dross shall be separated from the gold and all the precious metal shall be preserved. What a sacred time, then, it is when we are in a time of unexpected darkness! The night of weeping is sacred. It is full of mystery and possibility. Beyond it lies the morning, and if we trust God we shall meet it stronger, nobler men and women than we were when the night overtook us.

As Christians we must not forget that God often makes us his messengers of the morning to other souls who are weeping in the darkness of the night. How manifest this was in the life of Jesus! Wherever he walked, whatever the time of the day, the morning dawned in troubled souls who were blessed by his words and deeds. And the sweetest privilege that can come to us is the opportunity to usher in the morning to some night-bound soul. Alas, that we should miss so many opportunities through our selfishness and indifference!

Two little children were playing in a beautiful garden when suddenly the boy jumped to his feet, and shouted, harshly: "Go away from there, you beggar. You have no right to be looking at our flowers."

Another boy, about the age of the one who had spoken, who was pale, dirty, and ragged, was leaning against the fence, admiring the splendid show of roses and tulips within. His face reddened with anger at the rude language, and he was about to answer defiantly when a little girl sprang out from the arbor, and, looking at both, said to her brother: "How could you speak so, Herbert? I am sure his looking at the flowers doesn't hurt us." And then, to soothe the wounded feelings of the stranger, she added, "I'll give you some flowers if you will wait a moment," and she gathered a beautiful bouquet and handed it through the fence.

His face brightened with surprise and pleasure, and he earnestly thanked her.

Twelve years after this occurred the girl had grown to be a woman. One bright afternoon she was walking with her husband in the same garden when she observed a young man in workman's dress leaning over the fence and looking attentively at her and the flowers. Turning to her husband, she said: "It does me good to see people admiring the garden. I'll give that young man some of the flowers. Approaching him, she said: "Are you fond of flowers, sir. It will give me great pleasure to gather you some."

The young workman looked a moment into her

face, and then said, in a voice tremulous with feeling: "Twelve years ago I stood here, a ragged, hopeless little beggar boy, and you showed me the same kindness. The bright flowers and your pleasant words made a new boy of me—aye, and they made a man of me, too. Your face, madam, has been a light to me in my dark hours of life; and now, thank God, though that boy is still a humble, hard-working man, he is an honest and grateful one."

Tears stood in the eyes of the lady as, turning to her husband, she said: "God put it into my young heart to do that little act of kindness, and see how great a reward it has brought!" She had been God's messenger to open the gates of dawn to that soul. God waits every day to give to you and to me opportunities equally precious and glorious.

But surely I ought not to close our study without saying to any who are night-bound by sin that your darkness may also vanish in blessed hope and promise if you will give yourself to the suggestion of our text. The night of sin, the sorrow and the bondage which evil habits have brought to your heart, are not strong enough to resist the morning light of hope and forgiveness which may come to you in Jesus Christ. Has the night been long? Has the gloom of guilt hung threateningly

over your head? Has the sting of remorse burned in your conscience? Have your eyes been wet with tears at the shame of your transgressions? Has your heart been full of fear and sunk into hopelessness as you have struggled to do the good and to resist the wrong, and yet have failed? O, let me speak to you of Jesus, the Saviour, whose face is like the morning, and who is able to save unto the uttermost everyone who will come unto God by him. Give him your heart, rest your faith on him, and the night shall pass, and the morning shall dawn.

XXIX

THE PROMISED REWARD OF THE OVERCOMERS

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.—*Revelation* ii, 17.

THERE is something very significant in the way that, over and over again in these chapters, the Christian rewards are made to hinge on that one condition of victory. "To him that overcometh" promise after promise is made. Nothing could more seriously suggest to us that life is a battle-field and that we are called to be soldiers of Jesus Christ. No man will get to heaven without earnest struggle, and one might truthfully say that no man will be fit to go to heaven without struggle. Only that positive goodness which comes from definite choice between good and bad, and earnest battle for the good, could put us into harmony with those royal soldiers of Jesus Christ who have dared everything for their divine Lord.

Alfred Austin, the English poet laureate, has written a poem in which he treats that legend concerning Peter, that after Nero had burned the city

of Rome and then accused the Christians of doing it Peter was urged to leave the city to save his life. He did not know what to do. He wanted to be faithful to Jesus, and yet he wished to live. His friends told him that the church had other use for him and that he must flee. But Peter says:

"Do lords of spear and shield
Thus leave their hosts uncaptured on the field?
Nay, my task is plain.
But weak I stand, and I beseech you all
Urge me no more, lest at a touch I fall."

Then another friend, a beautiful youth who loves Peter with all his heart, pleads:

"My sire and brethren, yesterday
The heathen did with ghastly torments slay.
Pain like a worm beneath their feet they trod:
Their souls went up like incense unto God.
An offering richer yet can Heaven require?
Oh! live, and be my brethren and my sire."

Then Peter urges that if they love him they must leave him alone and not overpersuade him, and yet he permits himself to hesitate, a dangerous thing where duty is at stake. When a man knows his duty he must never allow it to be an open question. To do that is to lose everything. One voice, the stern voice of conscience, is whispering in his heart, "Stay." Then there is another voice, a voice from without, which says, "Go."

"And louder every moment, 'Go,' it cried;
And 'Tarry' to a whisper died.
And as a leaf, when summer is o'erpast,
Hangs trembling ere it fall in some chance blast,
So hung his trembling purpose; and fell dead.

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"And he arose and hurried forth and fled
From all that heaven of *love*, that hell of *hate*,
To the Campagna, glimmering wide and still;
And strove to think he did his Master's will.
But spectral eyes and mocking tongues pursued;
And with vague hands he fought a phantom brood."

But though Peter starts to flee, he is not happy.
He tries to make the argument sound logical. He
says, "Can I not do more living than dead?" But
he doubts it more every step. Finally he can stand
it no longer, and he falls on his knees in the
Appian Way and pours out his soul to God.

"'Master, who judgest, have I done amiss?'
Lo, in the darkness breaks a wandering ray;
A vision flash along the Appian Way.
Divinely in the pagan night it shone,
A mournful face; a figure hurrying on:
Though haggard and disheveled, frail and worn,
A King, of David's lineage, crowned with thorn.
'Lord, whither farest?' Peter, wondering cried.
'To Rome,' said Christ; 'to be recrucified.'"

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"Into the night the vision ebbed, like breath,
And Peter turned, and rushed on Rome and death."

We cannot come into the charmed circle of men who have known such struggles and won such victories except through honorable and victorious battle.

But the promises which Christ makes to his soldiers who overcome their sins through his grace are very splendid. First, there is the promise of sufficient food to sustain the victorious campaign. The hidden manna is promised to the victor. We know what that hidden manna was in Christ's case. He had meat to eat that the disciples knew not of, and he declared to them that it was his meat and drink to do the will of God. Jesus himself says that he is the bread of life upon which we may feed and never die. The Hebrews ate the manna in the wilderness, and yet they died, many of them very young; but we have the promise of our Lord that if we eat the hidden manna we shall have immortality. The soul cannot be fed upon the things which feed the body. The rich fool whom Christ portrays in the gospel was going to do that, but he could not. The soul must have higher food. It must be fed with the food of faith and hope and love, which can give it courage though the body dies.

A story is related of a captain as he lay on the battlefield of Shiloh. He was suffering greatly

from a fatal gunshot wound and from thirst. Speaking of it to the chaplain a little afterward, he said: "The stars shone out clear and beautiful above the dark field; and I began to think of that great God who had given his Son to die a death of agony for me; and that he was up there—up above the scene of suffering, and above those glorious stars; and I felt that I was going home to meet him and praise him there; and I felt that I ought to praise God, even wounded and on the battlefield. I could not help singing that beautiful hymn, 'When I can read my title clear.' And there was a Christian brother in the brush near me; I could not see him, but I could hear him. He took up the strains, and beyond him another and another caught it up. All over that terrible battlefield of Shiloh that night the echo was resounding; and we made the field of battle ring with the hymns of praise to God." Those men had the hidden manna; their knapsacks may have been empty and their canteens dry, but they fed on the hidden manna and their souls were comforted and inspired.

Have you the hidden manna? If not, you may have it. It is a shame to go with an empty larder while you call yourself by the name of Jesus. Christ is an abundant provider, and if we really

stand with integrity for him, and overcome in his name, we shall have an abundance of the heavenly food.

There is another beautiful promise to the victorious Christian—the promise of *the white stone*. It is possible that this figure may have been intended as a reference to a custom in connection with the ancient national games. If so, the illustration is very sublime. You see before you a vast amphitheater, with seats rising, tier on tier, crowded with eager and excited spectators. Sweet perfume drops through the canopy which shelters from the burning sun, and clouds of dust rise from the chariot wheels, from the glowing hoofs of the flying horses, and from the swift feet of those who run. As you watch and listen you suddenly hear a mighty shout that seems to almost rend the skies, as the cheers of the thousands echo round the scene; and presently a man steps forward who has won the race, or slain the lion, or killed the gladiator, to receive from the emperor's own hand a crown of laurel leaves, which fades by the very heat of the head that wears it. But the emperor gives him something more permanent in its value than that. In addition to the wreath he gives him a pure white stone, with his name written on it. This entitles him, on presentation, to be fed at

the expense of the nation and to be feted and honored wherever he goes. If we accept this as the illustration intended, and lift it up into the spiritual realm, how glorious is its promise! Christ bestows upon us, when we overcome our sins in his name and in his power, the white heart, the white soul, and that is the ticket before which all barriers go down and every door of heaven swings wide open. Jesus himself has said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

The final promise to the victor is that of *the new name*. There are many illustrations in the Bible which make this promise very interesting to us. God gave Abraham a new name. Originally his name was Abram, but because of his fidelity and the courage and faithfulness by which he overcame all trials and temptations and became known throughout the land wherever he went as "the friend of God," God changed his name to Abraham as a token of honor and love.

Jacob obtained his new name in a peculiar way. All his life, up to middle age, he had been known as Jacob, the supplanter. But on his way back to his father's house, when he learned that his brother was coming against him with an army, all the sins of his youth came back to haunt him, and he spent a night in an agony of prayer. It seemed to Jacob

as though an angel came and wrestled with him, and that night he overcame all his selfishness and meanness; he surrendered himself with all his soul and body to do the will of God; from that day he was a different man, and God said to him that he would change his name. He would no longer call him Jacob, the supplanter, but he would call him Israel, which signified a prince, one who had power with God and with man, and had prevailed.

Paul started into the world as Saul. As Saul he was bigoted, selfish, hard-hearted, and cruel. But when on the way to Damascus he was met with a vision of Jesus Christ, and was smitten down with the consciousness of his sin, and repented, the old name of Saul, which had so many wicked and evil associations with it, was taken away, and he became known as Paul, a beautiful and a glorious name, which he wore in honor to the day of his death. And so there were many others, like Boanerges and Peter, where the new name expressed the step which had been taken into a nobler, holier life, and the change of heart and the loftiness of character consequent upon it. So to every one of us, when we with faithful hearts overcome our temptations to sin and in Jesus's name and strength come off victorious and do the right, Christ will not only give the hidden manna, and

bestow upon us the white stone of a pure heart, but he will give us the new name, a love name, which no one else will know; but it will be a dear name by which he knows us and calls us.

If any discouraged soul is ready to say, "O, yes, that is all very well for the victor, but the promise there is all to the one who overcomes, and I am constantly being overcome"—to such a one I wish to say that you are not required to overcome in a lonely fight by yourself. God will help you. The Lord Jesus Christ, your Saviour, will help you. The Holy Spirit will help you. You shall be inspired. You shall be divinely strengthened. Once throw your whole self into it, and you will not lack for allies. Be sure you put yourself in, that's all. Heaven will not come from the outside and give you the victory while you are playing traitor or remain indifferent. Throw your soul into it and, whatever the odds on the other side, you shall overcome. In England, not long ago, a lecturer had been speaking against Christianity in a factory town. When the lecture was done one of the mill hands stood up and said: "I would like to ask the lecturer this one question: Thirty years ago I was the curse of this town and everybody in it. I tried to do better and failed. The teetotalers got hold of me, and I signed the pledge and broke

it. The police took me and sent me to prison, and the wardens tried to make me better, and I began to drink as soon as I left my cell. When all had failed I took Christ as my Saviour, and he made a new man of me. I am a member of the church, a class leader, superintendent of the Sunday school. If Christ is a myth and religion is untrue, how could I be so helped by them?" My friend, Christ will do for you whatever you need to make you a victorious Christian. Only one thing must you do—give him yourself.

XXX

THE PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY

Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.
—*John xi, 26.*

LAZARUS was dead, and the cry of a sister's broken heart had gone out across the land to Jesus. Christ had responded to that cry, as he ever will, and was now drawing near with his disciples to the house where his friends lived. Martha, who is on the watch for him, runs down the road to meet him, and impulsively calls aloud, "If thou hadst been here my brother had not died!" Christ assures her that her brother will rise again, and she replies that she does not doubt he will rise again at the resurrection of the dead on the last day, but for the present, and for all these intervening years, Lazarus seems dead to her. It was in his effort to rob death of this awful loneliness, and give this friend a new sense of the reality of the ever-living soul, that Jesus continued the conversation with the declaration of the text, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Mr. Spurgeon used to say that we do with the

promises of the Bible often as a poor old couple did with a certain precious document, which might have cheered their old age had they used it according to its real value. A gentleman stepping into a poor man's house saw framed and glazed upon the wall a French note for a thousand francs. He said to the old folks, "How came you by this?" They informed him that a poor French soldier had been taken in by them and nursed until he died, and he had given them that little picture when he was dying, as a memorial of him. They thought it such a pretty souvenir that they had framed it, and there it was adorning the cottage wall. They were greatly surprised when they were told it was worth a sum which would be quite a little fortune to them if they would but turn it into money. We are equally unpractical with far more sacred and more precious things. Here are these words of promise which God gave us to feed upon as the very bread of heaven. But how often we frame them and glaze them in our minds and hearts, and we speak in a complimentary way about them and say to ourselves, "They are so sweet and precious," and yet we never put them in at the bank and turn them into actual blessing in our hours of need. You have done as Martha did when she took the words, "Thy brother shall rise

again," and put round about them this handsome frame, "In the resurrection at the last day." Who here this morning is not sufficiently acquainted with the promises of God to insure salvation and to give the peace that passeth all understanding before the day is out, if you would but turn these precious lodes of bullion in God's Word into current coin for your spiritual confidence and peace?

The essence of our theme is the indestructibility of the soul. When Lazarus was laid away in his grave the body was dead. In that body all life had stopped. Every organ had ceased to perform its functions and it was fast falling into decay, like a house deserted to the storm and left a prey to the elements. But Lazarus, the thinking, hoping, immortal soul, was not dead. The vital, ever-living personality was alive, and Jesus in speaking of it to the disciples said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The spirit does not grow old with the body. Sometimes, under the stress of pain in the human house, the mental faculties may grow weak; but that is only caused by the conditions of the dwelling, and when that pressure is taken off the soul will know all the glorious sensations of eternal youth. Nothing is more magnificent in the history of man than the way the soul rejoices

and triumphs in rising superior to all the pains of the body and to all fears of its dissolution.

When Frances Ridley Havergal, the Christian poet, was taken suddenly ill, and the doctor spoke to her about her illness, fearing that she did not realize how dangerous was her condition, he found she was prepared for him, and in reply to his message she said: "I thought so; but it is really too good to be true that I am going. Doctor, do you really think I'm going?"

"Yes."

"To-day?"

"Probably."

Then she exclaimed, "Beautiful, splendid, to be so near the gate of heaven!"

Then, after a spasm of pain, she nestled down in the pillows, and said, "There, now; it is all over—blessed rest." Then she tried to sing, and she struck one glad, high note of praise to Christ, but could sing only one word, "He," and then all was still. She finished it in heaven.

The Christian's life is like the experience of some rivers in southern California. A river is born back amid the lofty mountains, fed by snow-drifts and by springs from the high places. It comes splashing and leaping down from the high hills; it sings songs that are full of glee and mer-

riment; it roars in the cataract for very joy of existence; on and on, growing ever larger, through the foothills and toward the valley it rolls, deepening and widening its current; it gives to everything, and yet constantly increases; birds and squirrels, and all the wild things of the woods and the hills, and then the flocks and herds and villages drink at its rim. It satisfies them all, and sweeps onward, ever growing greater until it meets the desert, and then, suddenly, without much premonition or prophecy, it sinks into the sand and is gone. Go on a mile, or two miles, or ten, and there is nothing to show for it; but pursue your course perhaps twenty miles away, and out of the sand up springs your river, stronger, fuller than ever, pouring on across the plain, and the flowers blossom, the soil grows rich, the fields green, and the trees clap their hands wherever the river cometh on its way to the illimitable sea. Our life is like that. Down from the mountains of childhood we come, buoyant, full of rollicking vigor; out through the foothills of youth and young manhood, singing with the very joy of living, on through the valley, growing stronger and greater by struggle and trial. Into the spirit of the Christ we grow, learning from him how much more blessed it is to give than to receive. Like the river, the

more blessings we give away, the wider our current, and then, suddenly, without much premonition, death looms before us. Our current was never so strong as now; we never knew the world so well; we were never able to do so much for it as now. But here is death, and we sink into the earth. But in Jesus Christ we know that our life no more ceases when it is lost in the shades of death than the Humboldt River stills its current when it passes out of sight in the sand. No, indeed; on through the tunnel of death flows the current of our immortality, and up and out on the other side, amid the bright fields of Eden, our life shall flow on forever. Moses found his grave in the valley of Moab. But that tremendous vitality, that glorious spirit which led the children of Israel out of Egypt, was not quenched there, for he appears again on the Mount of Transfiguration in blessed sympathy with the Christ. And Jesus Christ, nailed to the cross on Calvary, pierced to the heart by the Roman soldier's spear, cried, "It is finished," and they laid him down in the tomb of Joseph in the garden, and rolled the stone across the sepulcher's mouth, and the seal of the government was put upon it. Stout soldiers from Gaul kept sleepless watch about that tomb, but the Christ, who had been in Paradise with the dying

thief who had been transformed by faith in him, returned on Easter morning to take possession of the wounded body that had been his home for three and thirty years. Like a flash of lightning the angel descended and rolled back the stone from the mouth of the tomb, while the soldiers fell like dead men, and Christ came forth in triumph. He appeared in the same body, glorified and spiritualized, a pledge that all who sleep in him shall have bodies fashioned like unto it. The life of Jesus did not end on the cross. The body was slain there, but the personality, the soul, did not die.

There can be only one thought for us all this morning, and that is, that in Jesus Christ we may triumph over the fear and the power of death. Without Christ and this blessed Easter hope men are in bondage to the fear of death. One man when he came to die shouted aloud, "Stop that clock!" The clock hung opposite his bed. He knew he was dying, and he was not ready. He had the impression that he was to die at midnight. He heard the ticking of the clock, and it was agony in his ear. He saw the hands, minute by minute, approaching the dreaded hour, and he had no hope. In his blind terror he cried out, "Stop that clock!" His weeping friends stopped the clock; but, alas, that could not aid him! Time moved on just the

same. Eternity made its swift approach, and the stopping of the clock could not prepare him to meet his God. How different was the feeling of an earnest Bible class teacher who, when his friends told him that death was at hand, said to them, "Then throw back the shutters and let the sunshine in!"

To the Christian the promise of immortality is the most glorious promise in the world, because it is the promise of blessed reunion with those who have gone before. Who so poor that he has not some treasures in heaven that are more precious than all the riches held in the strong boxes of any safe-deposit vault on the globe? It is well to recall them this Easter morning—our own group, the father who held us so strongly in his arms when we were little, who hoped and planned for us as we grew larger; the mother into whose face we looked first for love and sympathy, and whose heart never ceased to beat with fidelity while she remained on earth. O, the loneliness when she died! The husband, the wife, the little children, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, it seemed to tear our very hearts from our bosoms when death came for them. Ah, this Easter morning our hearts grow warm with hope and trust. They are not dead; they are living; they are in the Father's

house; and in the midst of them, the center of their joy, is the glorious Christ. The marks of the thorns are on his brow; there are nail prints in his hands; but the love and the glory of his face are beyond description. If there be a lonely one here—it may be one orphaned from childhood, to whom the world has been poor in friendships, and to whom even heaven seems a lonely spot—how glorious the thought that you may so enter into fellowship with Jesus Christ as your Saviour and your friend here that you shall rejoice in his presence and fellowship forever.

There was once a poor Chinaman who by some strange set of circumstances found himself alone in London. He was walking along the streets one day in a fog and a drizzling rain, wellnigh breaking his heart with longing for his native land, when suddenly the sun burst forth bright and clear, drove the clouds away, and lifted the fog. The little Chinaman cheered up amazingly.

“Why, what is the matter with you to-day? What is the cause of your rejoicing?” asked an acquaintance.

“What is the cause, indeed?” replied the Chinaman, pointing with his finger to the sky. “Don’t you see there? That is China’s sun.” And as he said it he danced on the pavement like a schoolboy.

Everything else was strange to him—the streets, the inhabitants, the scenery, even the stars. The only thing he beheld in London that he had seen at home was the sun; but he felt comforted under the face of the same sun.

So I thank God that if there be a lonely soul on earth, who cannot remember his father or his mother, who has never known the blessed fellowship of wife or husband, who has never looked into the deep heavenly eyes of childhood and felt the Godlike throb of fatherhood or motherhood, still there may be such divine fellowship of soul with Jesus Christ, the Saviour, that heaven will be glorious and beautiful and homelike because the same Saviour that we have known here, who has been the most precious blessing of our earthly life, shall be the center of heaven's beauty and glory throughout all eternity. The Christ who knocked at the door of our hearts when we were sinners; the Christ who stretched out his arms to us when we were burdened, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" the Christ who has stood by us in every dark hour, who has come to us when the waves ran high about us and the night was dark, saying to us, "Lo, it is I; be not afraid!" the Christ who said to us, "In my Father's house are many

mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"—this is the Christ who shall be our King and our Lord in heaven and in the sunshine of whose face we shall abide forever.

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